Volume IV Carpe Noctem® Magazine Issue 1

# Carpe Noctem®

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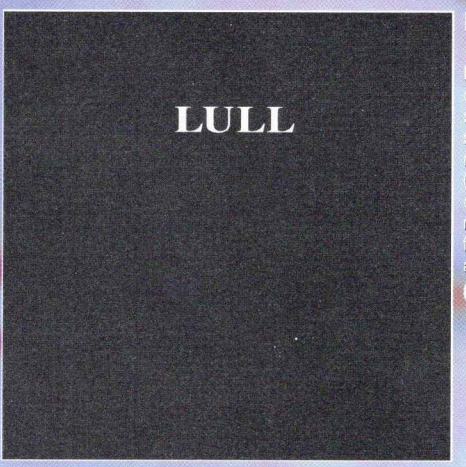


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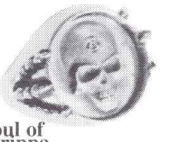

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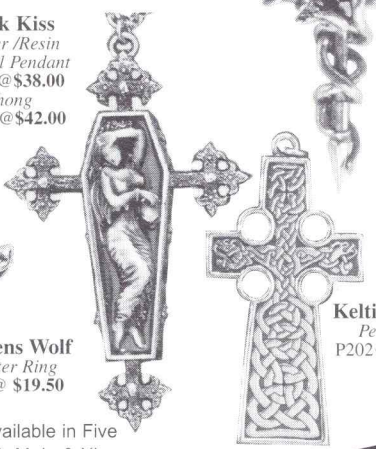

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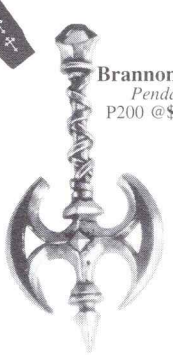

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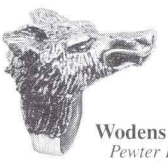

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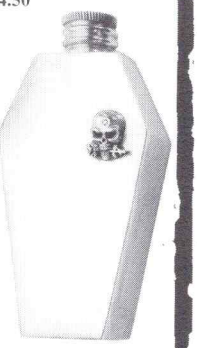

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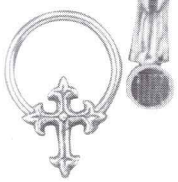

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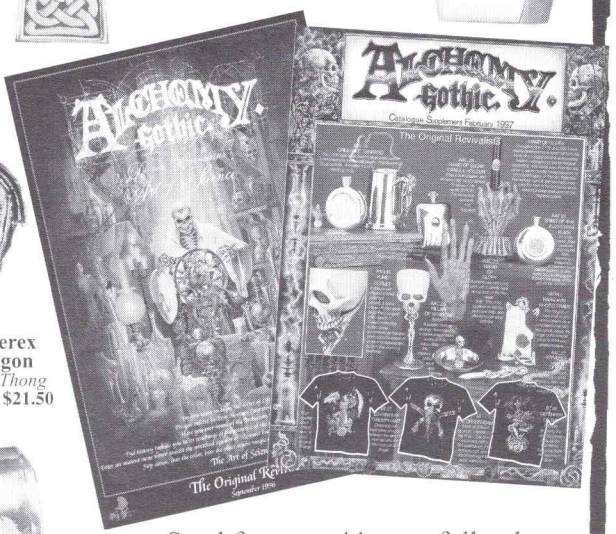


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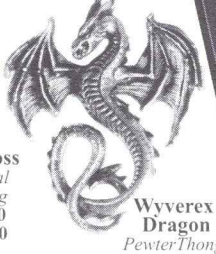

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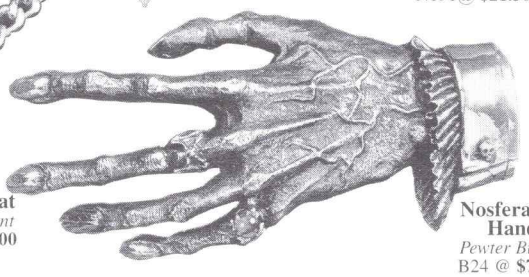

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# Table of Contents

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## Regular Features

10 Fashion
18 Cinematic Autopsy
26 Johnny the Homicidal Maniac Comic by Jhonen Vasquez
37 Le Conservatoire

**Special Thanks:** John Kuramoto; Bonnie To; Paul Lee; John Mueller; Kathy Keeley at Mute Records; Cheryl Laton; Dave Burnham; Patrick Jodoin; Cliff Nielsen; Mitch Mayes; Tony Timpone; every one who reads Carpe Noctem and especially those who ask for it at their local boostores! And to my very good friend Alessandra at Le Salon in Mill Valley CA, for beautiful hair and friendship for the past 14 years;

**Special Note:** Right before the printing of this issue we received the brand spankin' new **Sqee #1** by Jhonen Vasquez. Pick it up at comic stores everywhere or write to us or Slave Labor Graphics, 979 S. Bascom Avenue, San Jose CA 95128 (408.971.8929 phone). You'll really enjoy Squee's spin-off from *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*.

**Correction:** In Volume III, Issue 3 we neglected to mention within the *Chameleon Body* feature that text for the book was written by David Alan Mellor and Anthony Shelton. We also neglected to blatantly point out that it was a book. Even though we think our readers are smart enough to figure it out for themselves: **The Chameleon Body** is a beautiful book of photos which we still highly recommend. Oh yeah and you can get it from Antique Collector's Club, Market Street Industrial Park, Wappingers Falls, NY 12590. Please tell them you saw it in Carpe Noctem. Thanks.

4 Matt Towler
6 Lorelei Shannon
8 Jessica Boone
11 David Schow
16 Cliff Nielsen
20 Rik Rawling
21 The Brickbats
22 Joe Jusko
27 Diamanda Galás
32 Peter Kim
34 E. Katie Holm
46 Wendy Klein
48 Louis Small, Jr.
50 David Quinn
54 Adam Rex
58 Loren Nerell
60 Heather Reneé Russ
62 Alderac Entertainment's Legend of the 5 Rings

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# Sijin

*"There are defeats more triumphant than victories."*
- Montaigne

The wind blows gently through the tall grass of Inoshisa Meadow. I feel the warm summer's breeze caress my hair like an ardent lover as I stand amidst the blades of green. Off in the distance a lone bird calls out, an anxious beckoning for his lost love's return. The scent of jasmine and hollyberry drifts across the plain and envelopes me in a gossamer veil of aromatic grandeur. "This will be a fine place in which to test myself," I whisper to no one but the deep cerulean sky.

*"Sweet is war to those who have never experienced it."*
- Latin Proverb

My hand drifts over the hilt of my sword like a hungry manta ray searching for the right moment to strike at its prey. I feel the weight of four feet of glittering steel at my hip and smile at the multitude of prospects it offers. It hangs there, wrapped in its ornately decorated scabbard, its metal tempered to an awesome strength, honed to a razor's edge, judge and jury to my acumen in the vicissitudes of the Law of the Blade.

*"Go tell the Spartans, thou who passeth by:*
*Carrying out their orders, here we lie."*
- Simonides

I have trained my whole life in preparation for this moment, for I was born samurai, son of a noble lord, servant of my Shogun. My life I would willingly lay down at his command. I am an extension of his arm and of his might. I am but a symbol of his will. I stand, on this field of battle, like a bowstring drawn and loaded awaiting the order at which I am to fly to find my intended mark.

*"All is lost save honor."*
- Francis I

You step out of the waning shadows which stretch long and thin upon the ground. Your arms, two clusters of muscle and sinew, speak of your countless hours of training. Your stance is that of a man who holds himself and his abilities in high regard. Your eyes are that of a killer, cold and unforgiving. You turn to me and our eyes meet. It is in that moment that we both know that the outcome of our meeting is decided, the die has been cast.There is no hope of me ever winning against an opponent who is obviously more skilled than myself. I suddenly realize that I have been sent on a fool's errand, destined to die. Honor dictates that I follow through with this charade. I know that, should I back away, seppuku is my only means of reparation. Death is my destiny no matter what I do.

*"Show me a hero and I'll write you a tragedy."*
- F. Scott Fitzgerald

There is a sullen air on this field of honor and I move to stand opposite you. Your unbound hair blows in the breeze and across your eyes, yet your attention never wavers from my sword arm. If I am to move, even slightly, your reaction will be quick and utterly devastating. I watch the lone bird take flight and carry my dreams away to the afterlife.
I think back to all of the things I'd hoped for my life, all of the illusions I'd spun from the silk of delusion to placate myself into thinking that I was a great warrior. And now, your blade will cut free those tendrills of fantasy and send them spinning towards the oblivion of forever.

*"Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong will to live taking the form of a readiness to die."*
- G.K. Chesterton

The move is made and your reaction is even faster than I could have imagined. A searing tear appears across my abdomen and my entrails fall out in a great heap of steaming offal. Your motion stops, frozen at its intended destination and still your eyes never leave mine. My knees go weak and I succumb to their betrayal. I fall forward, seemingly forever, and land prone in the tall grass. My face lays buried in a patch of wild flowers and I cast a glance upwards. Your form towers over me like a great giant standing guard over his coveted hoard. Your lips move, yet I have drifted past the need to hear. My blood spills out to nourish the meadow of my demise and I feel the warm embrace of eternity being pulled about me. There is time for one last look at the azure sky before my eyes darken. I watch the lone bird soar towards the heavens and I give my spirit leave to follow it.

*"Now the laborer's task is o'er;*
*Now the battle day is past;*
*Now upon the farther shore;*
*Lands the voyager at last."*
- John Ellerton

# Matt Towler

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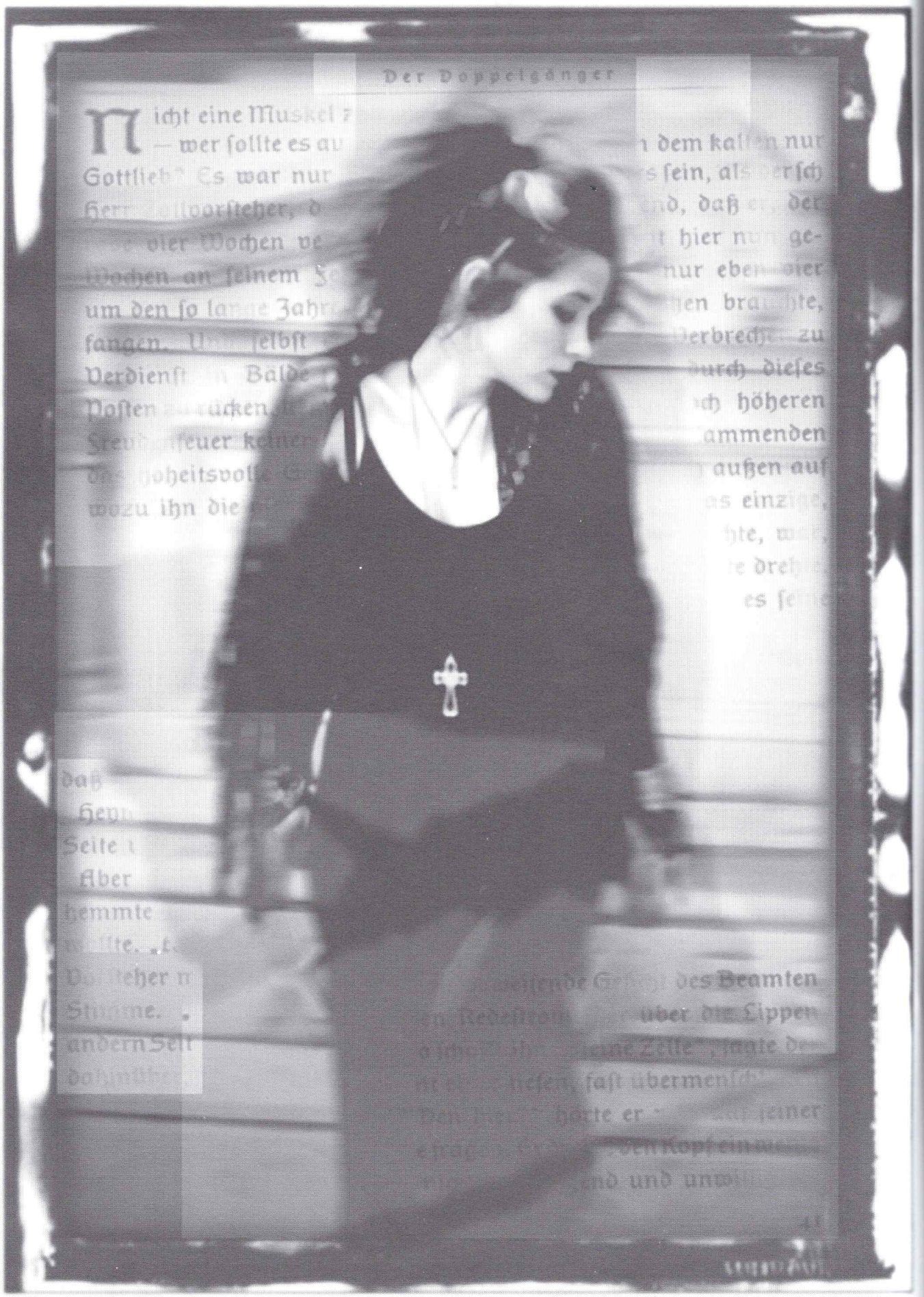

# Somnambulist

"somnambulist inject their gothic vials of blood, guts, and power into their confrontational brand of prog, mixing equal parts hellfire and brimstone into a cauldron bubbling with '70s audaciousness and '90s abandon."

—I/E Magazine

Somnambulist's debut CD comes in a digipak featuring the remarkable imagery of Bonnie To. The CD was produced by Glass Hammer and mastered by Bob Katz, Digital Domain Studios.

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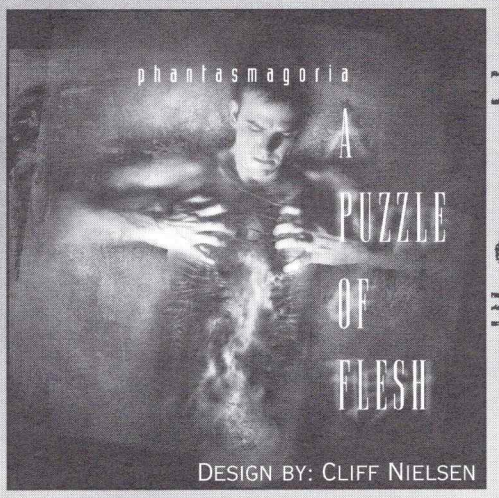



# creating a puzzle of flesh

# lorelei shannon

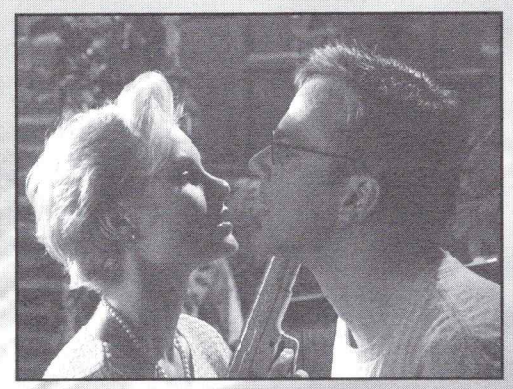
I can remember as a kid, sitting in front of my television set, plugging my Atari 2600 into the wall and slapping my *Pitfall* cartridge in and embarking on, what was at the time, an incredible journey. There I sat, watching my little guy battle alligators, swinging on vines, and, ultimately dying a grisly pixelated death. A lot has changed since those days. Games are more complicated, graphics are more intricately drawn and game designers are becoming artists in their own right. As computers became more able to handle the serious number crunching and AutoCAD made a designer's most obscure ideas feasible, it was obvious that someone would turn a creative eye to computer game design. Now, the gaming industry is involved in a "who can top who" game of epic proportions. About a year ago, Sierra Online released a doozy of a game called *Phantasmagoria* which was designed by pioneer Roberta Williams. Based on that game's success, Sierra recently unleashed *Phantasmagoria 2: A Puzzle of Flesh*. The task of designing a sequel to the impressive *Phantasmagoria* fell to someone of notable talent, Lorelei Shannon. Her background as a writer and long time role playing game enthusiast made her infinitely qualified for the obstacle set before her: design a game that stayed true to the spirit of the original, but put a brand new spin on the ball. The answer? She has and she did. *Phantasmagoria 2* is a scary, impressive, puzzling and downright fun game that succeeds on all levels. We took some time and questioned Lorelei about her background, the vocation of game designer, and her newest innovation, her new born baby. Her answers just may surprise you...

*How did you get started designing games?*
The first "games" I designed were D&D scenarios, when I was just a kid. I've always been interested in games of all sorts and the fantasy world you can enter when you play them. I joined Sierra first as a writer, which is what I consider myself most of the time. Eventually they noticed my brilliance and promoted me to game designer. I'm kidding, I'm kidding, but I did work my way up through the ranks at Sierra.

*What is your educational background?*
I have a BFA in sculpture and metalsmithing, and a minor in English. Really useful stuff! It qualifies me to be a welder or even a substitute teacher!

*What drew you to working in this competitive field?*
I started working in the gaming field at a tiny little play-by-mail company called Flying Buffalo in Scottsdale, Arizona. Actually, Buffalo invented the PBM game industry. My husband Daniel is a programmer, and he got me interested in computer games. When I realized that I could essentially write interactive novels, I was hooked.

*In your opinion, what makes a good computer game?*
It depends on the type of game. I really enjoy shooters like *Doom,* and all those need are excellent graphics, great monsters, big BIG guns and explosions of flesh and bone. The games I like best



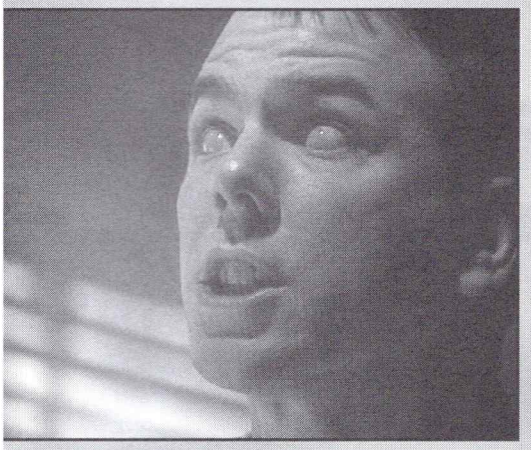
are adventures, though. I personally enjoy games with a lot of plot and good characters, like Jane Jensen's *Gabriel Knight* series. As for puzzles, I'm not that picky about them. If they're minimal but the story is excellent, I don't mind. *A Puzzle of Flesh* is more of an interactive novel than a puzzle game.

*How did you get the gig working on* Phantasmagoria 2*?*
Everybody at Sierra knows I'm a horror writer, and when Roberta decided she didn't want to do *Phantasmagoria 2*, I was the natural choice. Who knows, maybe it was the human skull on my desk, or my collection of autopsy photographs that influenced their decision.

*Was it somewhat daunting to step into Roberta Williams' shoes?*
Not at all. I knew I wanted to take *Phantasmagoria 2* in a totally different direction from the first game. I started over with a new plot, setting, characters, everything. My method of telling a horror story is very different from Roberta's, so it wasn't like I had to try and copy her style or anything. The first *Phantasmagoria* was very much 1960's haunted house horror, and that's just not my thing. I like psychological stuff, along the lines of Clive Barker, Kathe Koja and Edgar Allan Poe. It was pretty much like starting a new series.

*Take us step-by-step through how a game goes from the idea stage to the finished product.*
When you're pitching to a company like Sierra, you start out with one- or two-page proposals outlining the story, type of game and features you want to work on. When one of those is accepted, you write up a treatment like you would for a movie; anywhere from ten to thirty pages long. From there, at least with an adventure game, you create the game design: writing up the character sheets, the regions, the rooms, the puzzles, and the flow of the action. By now you're up to several hundred pages of documentation. Next, you create the script; the actual lines the characters speak along with any internal documentation for the game, like the e-mail interface in *Phantasmagoria 2*. By the time you're done, you usually have anywhere from three to six hundred pages worth of documentation. It's like writing a couple of novels.
Sometime along the line, usually after you've got the character sheets and region stuff done, work starts on the game backgrounds. That's if you're doing an animated or 3-D game. If it's a full motion video game like *Phantasmagoria 2,* you don't really start on production until the entire script is done. I mean, the programmers can start roughing out the rooms and regions and the artists can start on the interface, but not much can be done until the script is set. You're basically shooting a movie. That means you have to cast the actors, hire a crew, etc.
After you've got all your video footage done, and in our case, it was a **lot**, the programmers begin putting it together and programming the game sequences and puzzles, and the artists start on the post-production effects, game graphics and puzz

art. Of course, the video has to be compressed and the sound sweetened.
The game has to be tested, debugged and tested



some more before it's released. It's a long, grueling process, *Phantasmagoria 2* was about two years in the works.

*How has the response to* Phantasmagoria 2 *been?*
Great so far. People either really love it or they find it completely disgusting. Any strong reaction is fine with me.

*What can you tell me about* Phantasmagoria 2 *being banned in Australia and Singapore?*
I don't really know the details, but I'm sure it's either the strong sexual content or the gore they object to. (I do want to point out, however, that unlike the first *Phantasmagoria,* this game has no sexual violence. Lots of sex, lots of violence, but they're separate.) The game has also been severely edited in England. I find that more than a little amusing coming from a country whose royalty have traditionally slaughtered each other and stepped on the bodies on their way to the throne. I wonder if the Globe Theatre is allowed to perform *Titus Andronicus* any more...? I don't mean to sound bitter, but it pisses me off whenever a government tries to tell its population what they can and can't look at. Adults are fully capable of deciding what they do and don't like, and avoiding anything they personally find offensive.

*How do you feel about the idea of the computer gaming industry imposing warning labels or even self-censoring the products they release?*
I totally object to anyone outside the industry labeling or censoring product. I most particularly object to the government getting involved. There are enough people trying to edge out personal freedom as it is. We don't need that. However, I do think that the industry labeling (not censoring) its own product is a very good idea. People have a right to know what's in a game they're purchasing, and who better to tell them than the makers of that game. *PH2* has warning labels stuck all over it. Heh heh heh...

*I know that you've recently become a parent. Has that experience changed the way you look at designing and would you let your son play* Phantasmagoria 2*?*
Well, he has a little trouble with the interface, since he's only four months old, but we've been playing all the gory movies for him. I'm kidding! Of course I wouldn't want him, or any other child, playing this game. I've said in innumerable interviews that *Phantasmagoria 2* is adult entertainment, and I sincerely hope that no one under seventeen goes anywhere near it. There's this popular misconception that if a thing is called a game, it's meant for children. That's just not true. *A Puzzle of Flesh* was designed as disturbing adult horror from the word go. I don't want to warp the minds of small children. I just want to warp grown-ups. They need it more.
As for whether having a baby has changed the way I look at designing, I guess it has. I don't mean that I would want to tone down my horror stuff–of course not! But a baby sees the world with such new eyes, it's made me want to examine kids' software more carefully, and maybe consider designing some again. (I co-designed *Pepper's Adventures in Time* and *King's Quest VII,* both kid/family oriented games.) I think some really original, exciting, and weird software for kids would be a lot of fun to work on.

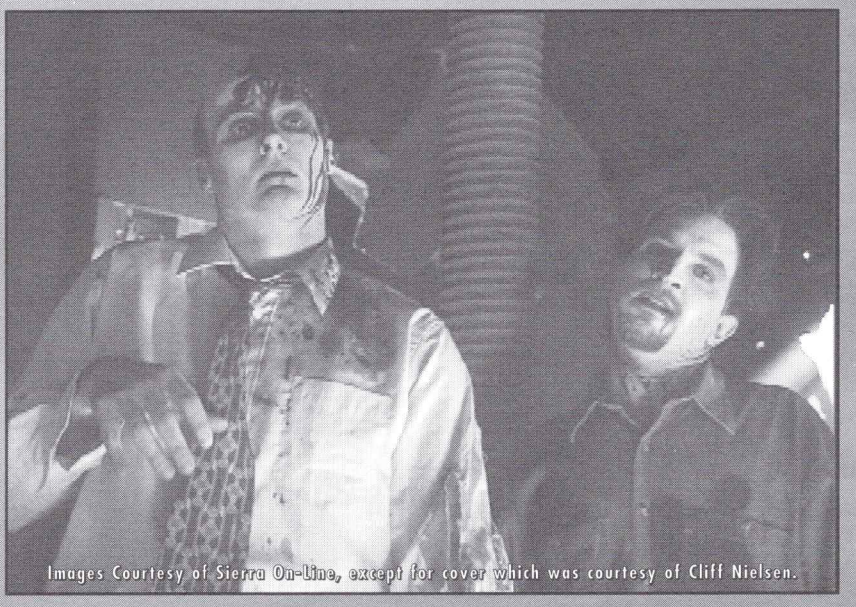
*I'm noticing that a lot of game companies are coming from the Seattle area. What is the allure of that area for code jockeys?*
It's so gray and cold and rainy, it's easy for companies to hook their employees on lattes and mochas and get hours more of caffeine-induced labor from them. Hell, I don't know! I suspect it has something to do with the rich artistic and writing communities up here. Programmers are artists in their own way. I think the moody atmosphere is attractive to us gloomy intense artistic types.

*What do you consider to be some of the better designed games that are presently on the market?*
As I mentioned before, I really enjoy the *Gabriel Knight* series. I love *Doom,* and I really like *Descent. Bad Day at the Midway* was very cool. *Harvester* is good nasty fun, and of course, *Bad Mojo* is a real kick.

*Where do you think the state of the art in computer gaming will be in five years?*
Graphics will continue to improve, of course, and 3-D technology will get cheaper, both monetarily and memory-wise. That will allow much greater freedom in designing fantastic and involved game worlds. On-line gaming is getting more popular, and will continue to do so as technology improves. I think the industry is turning away from full motion video for now, since it's very expensive, but it'll resurface eventually. The whole thing is moving slowly and inexorably toward VR. True VR is a ways off, but I think we'll see a lot of interesting things invented and used along the way. The great thing is, the gaming industry leads the way as far as software advances are concerned. You can always tell what's state-of-the-art by looking at the latest, hottest games.

*Do you have any other projects lined up for the future?*
No software projects at the moment. I just finished up a horror novel called *Rags and Old Iron,* and I'm starting up another one. I'm staying at home with the offspring for now. Do you know how much work you have to put into raising the Antichrist? Kidding! I'm Kidding!

by Carnell



Images Courtesy of Sierra On-Line, except for cover which was courtesy of Cliff Nielsen.

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Jessica Boone's work, please
write to:
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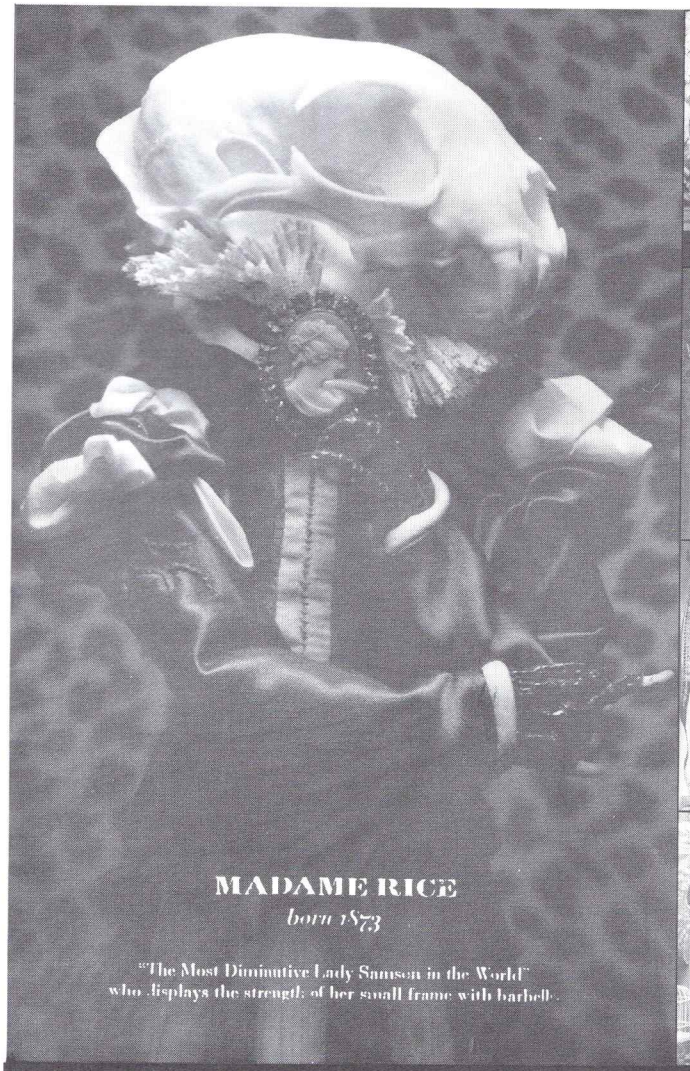
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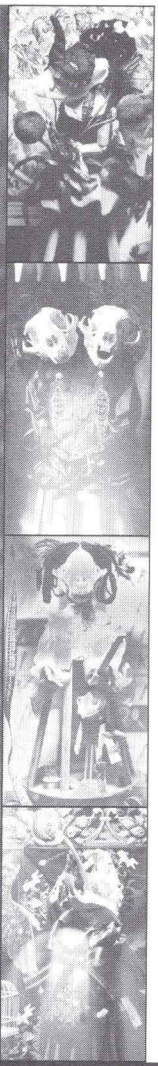

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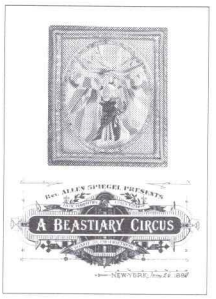


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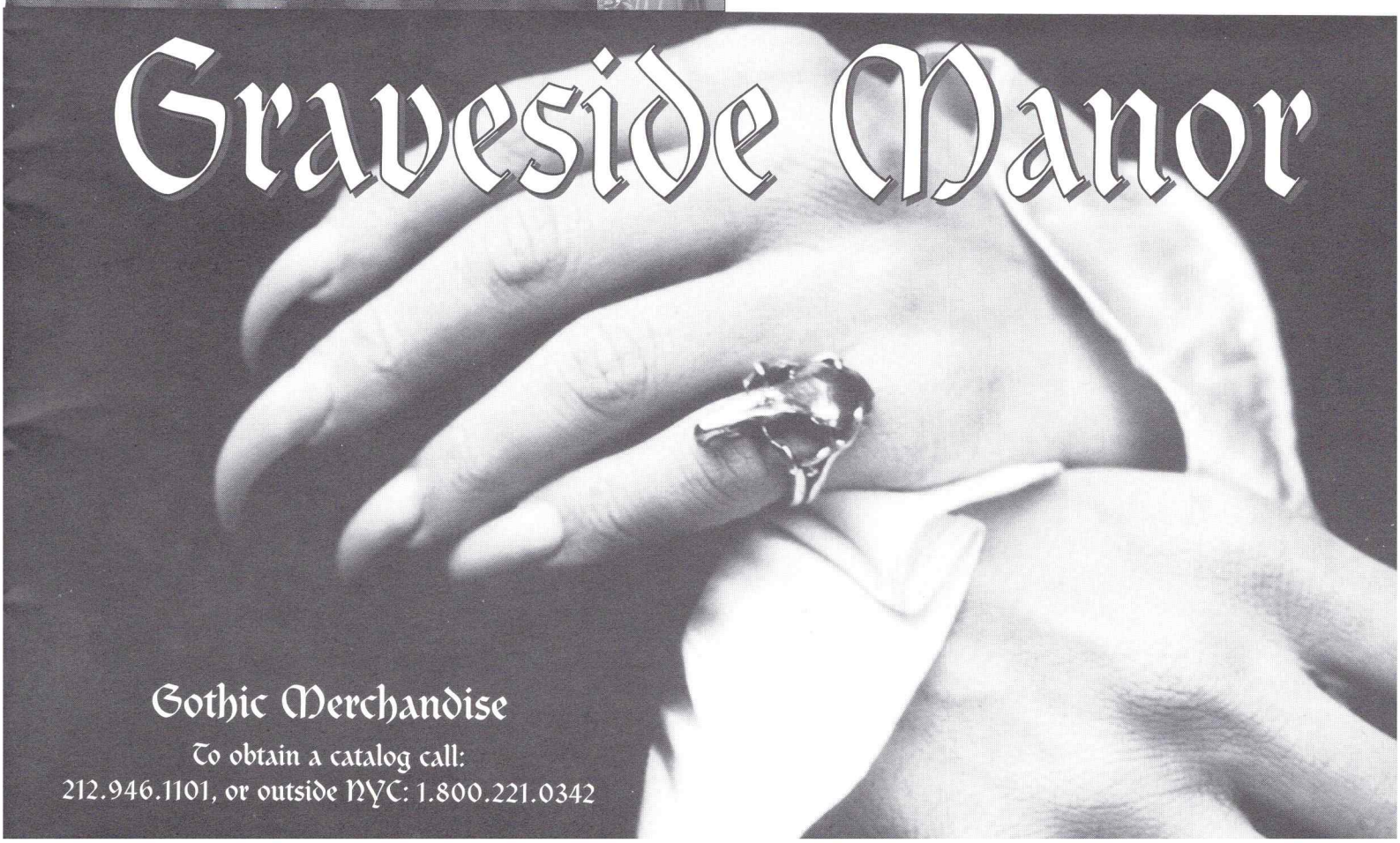


## Gothic Merchandise

To obtain a catalog call:
212.946.1101, or outside NYC: 1.800.221.0342

# Fashion!

by: Catía

Here I am once again to thrill you with my wisdom-or something like that. Hopefully, you are finding these juicy tidbits as invaluable as I do when it comes to dolling yourself up. Jennifer from Minneapolis writes:

"...Thanks for featuring Urban Decay make-up! I can't get enough of their stuff! I recommend you check out Make-up Forever-it's available at most Nordstroms. They have killer shadows, glitter (I'm a glitter fiend) and great lipsticks and blot powder (like bluish-tinted white and pale lavendar.)"

She goes on to recommend Chanel's "Ciel de Nuit" polish, a blue-black which has sparkles. Jennifer was nice enough to taunt me with a drop on the stationery and it looks great! Looks like '97 will be the year for choices in make-up for the "pastel-challenged" like myself. Thanks Jennifer!

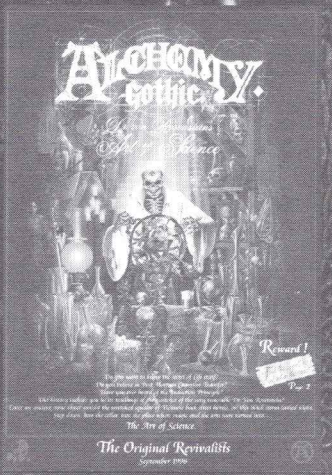
Catalog Reviews
Please mention Carpe Noctem® when ordering. Thanks!

### Fall From Grace Mail Order Catalog

Put out by Ipso Facto in beautiful Fullerton, CA, this catalog contains a good cross section of the merchandise the store carries. If you're looking for clothing, leather, t-shirts, stickers, accessories and music this is a great place to start. I got a pair of the 20 eye knee-hi leather boots by TredAir Griptast (*FFG 2026) and I love them! They fit great (once you master the science of lacing these babies) and I can wear them for hours. I must admit though: after I take them off I feel like I can fly! They set off the metal detectors at the airport with all the screws in the soles and the steel toes so make sure you leave extra early cuz you'll be spending time at the security points. Get a pair of these boots! $2 for the catalog, Ipso Facto, 517 N. Harbor Blvd., Fullerton CA 92832

### Amazon Dry Goods

WOW! That's what I said when I got this packet of catalogs. If you are seriously into costuming (or not so serious) this is something to check out. ADG has five catalogs to choose from: the Pattern Catalog ($7), the General Catalog ($3), the Shoe Catalog ($5), the Window Treatment Pattern Catalog ($2) and the Corset Catalog ($17). Prices are US and include shipping. The Pattern Catalog has over 1,100 patterns for men, women, children and dolls and covers the Medieval era through 1950 with the most emphasis on the Victorian and Edwardian eras. The General Catalog has everything except patterns and contains "How to's", history, accessories, dolls, hats, fans-you get the idea. In the interest of conserving space, let me suggest that you direct any questions to ADG directly at 319.322.6800 or write to them: 2218 E. 11th Street, Davenport IA 52803-3760.




### Alchemy Gothic

This groovy jewelry company originated in England 14 years ago and now has offices in the US to further their quest for total world domination. I hope they succeed. The catalog is full color and packed with lovely trinkets made of pewter, resin, or silver. Their extensive product line also includes t-shirts, flasks, tankards, flatware, sconces...I could go on but why don't you just see for yourself? All items are high quality and the prices are very reasonable. Part of the catalog fee is redeemed with purchase. $4. Legends of England, POB 417, Dept. GN, Highlands NJ 07732-0417

### Archaic Manuscripts

This little catalog features spooky stationery for spoooky people! You can also get corset rubber stamps, sealing wax and seals and neat-o notepads for noting. Send $2 for catalog to Archaic Manuscripts, Dept. C, POB 13084, Torrance CA 90503.

### Dracula's Lair

This Salt Lake City-based company distri... Count Dracula's Pendant, which is sterling silver ... contains actual soil from Dracula's hom... Transylvania, Romania. Encased with the se... Dracula's family seal. They were kind enough to ... one to me and when I wear it out people envy me ... isn't that what Fashion is all about??) On a ... serious note, a portion of every sale goes to a ... to help children with AIDS and orphans in Ro... $39.95 includes US shipping. POB 71416, ... Lake City UT 84171.

### Eternal Love

This New York-based manufacturer produces ... really nice pieces for sale through stores like C... Upstairs (Boston), Smack (Nashville), Exp... (Seattle), and Leather Temple (NYC). I especiall... the Princess Dress, which is a short black co... nation of velvet and gauze. The background show... Renaissance Bodice, which is a lush deep p... velvet and retails for $34. Other favorites a... Unisex Shirt Cobweb Lace ($54) which is ... nylon webbing with buttons down the front an... Cherub Dress, made of long black flowing rayon ... goes perfect with corsets or bodices. If you w... find the nearest retailer call 212.346.9306, ... 49 Market Street, 2nd Floor, New York ... 10002 or email: info@eternallove.com

Eternal Love: Renaissance Bodice and Cherub Dress

# Look Out–He's Got a Knife!
# David J. Schow

Interview by Carnell • Photos by David J. Schow unless otherwise noted.

The first time I saw David J. Schow speak was at Fangoria Weekend of Horrors. He was a guest there scheduled to give out one of their Chainsaw Awards. As fate would have it, Brandon Lee won the Best Actor award for his role in *The Crow* film. A friend of Brandon's, David accepted the award for the late actor and, in an emotionally charged speech, expressed his (and our) dismay at the thought of plans to go ahead with a sequel to the film. During his short speech, the author stated his thoughts so eloquently that the entire room was left in hushed silence as he stalked off the stage. As first impressions go, this was one of the best. David J. Schow is a gifted, outspoken, viciously original writer who expresses himself first and considers the political ramifications of his statements later. He neither caters to public opinion nor does he bend to the sheep-like mentality displayed by other writers in the horror field. My kinda guy...

*What is your educational background and what drew you to writing as a profession?*

I'm a university drop-out. Three semesters and gone. I always wanted to write, so I wrote; the trick was getting people to pay money for what was getting written anyway. The irony of my brief fling with higher education is that, today, I get paid to lecture at universities about writing–I get paid more for one night than my original scholarship/grant had been to go to school for an entire semester, in the first place. Plus lodging and meals.

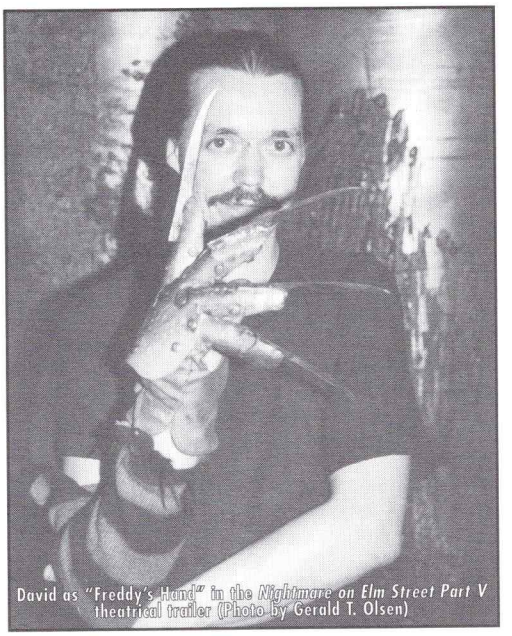
*Do you recommend that anyone who has the desire to write should just get on with it and forego the getting of, say, a degree in English or literature?*

An English degree might help you counter certain deficiencies of grammar which haunt me to this day. Otherwise, I'd forego writing classes and workshops, in college or anywhere else. By the time people with whom I'd gone to college acquired their degrees, I had sold both fiction and nonfiction professionally. My "diploma" was a check and an acceptance letter that I treasure still; how do you feel about your diplomas? A literature degree might help you read, but it certainly won't help you write, and shouldn't you be reading without professional help? When I see how many writers have to make ends meet by teaching writing, it depresses me. What do you do with a workshop story? Curry the approval of an instructor whom you essentially pay to critique at your material, then, if you're lucky and you dare, submit it to an editor. I say cut directly to the editor, since the editor is the person with the power to buy your story or book, and the rest is just coddling, salve for your ego that costs you money. Don't worry about joining clubs, or ferreting out "tricks" or shortcuts. Don't even listen to me. Just write.

*Do you believe that Horror, as a genre, is dead?*

Dead? No. How could it be? Horror has been with us since before the written word, before literature, and before schools of criticism that try to declare something as broad and fundamental as horror dead. Horror can easily weather a market slump because it's primal, it transcends genre. It teaches us our shape.

If you say, "Gee, sci-fi's in a slump," people know immediately what you mean. If you say speculative fiction is in decline, they'll look at you like you're nuts. As opposed to what other kind of fiction? The horror version of sci-fi is HOO-ROR–dark, fantastical literature rendered down into a consumer category. By its stench you shall know it: good vs. evil parables that function as advertisements for one outmoded religion or another. Xerographic bullshit in which families with possessed children move into new digs in sinister New England towns, above old Indian burial grounds, and awaken ancient naughtiness. Virtually any novel that begins with a prologue set in another century. Or copycat writing by people whose entire prep is slasher movies and the Stephen King Library. Say it loud: HOO-ROR. Then shoot it in the head. Aim for the wallet.



David as "Freddy's Hand" in the *Nightmare on Elm Street Part V* theatrical trailer (Photo by Gerald T. Olsen)

*You've said that "every writer of any worth writes for an imaginary group of about ten readers in his or her head –that coterie who will understand every layer of story at whatever depth you care to veneer the writing." My question is, do you think that most writers feel this way? Are these ten people the type that you would ever invite to your house for dinner?*

As for other writers, you'd have to ask them. But make no mistake, writing is still primarily an act of ego, upon which you gild other considerations as you go. You need a strong ego to armor yourself against constant rejection of your work and of you as a writer (not to mention you as a human being) so among those ten imaginary people in your head are folks you invent for the purposes of testing your work. Attacking it, to see if it holds water in ways that matter to you. But would you want to sit at a table with ten people picking apart every nuance of your work? No again. That's why they're strictly imaginary. Besides, if they were real, I'd never give them my street address, and even if I did, it's really hard to find my house.

*Are you ever completely pleased with a story once you decide to let it go so it can be published?*

About 50%. Copyedit and proofs can craze you, because the urge to tinker is always there and you've got to learn to lock the lid down and get on with the next job. I do believe that once a story is published, you shouldn't mess with it except to amend an outright factual error, or scotch something that will irritate you for the rest of time because it rings sourly. Other than obvious corrections, you've just got to learn to leave it alone. When I was on the brink of my first story collection, I rewrote some of the stories front-to-back. That's not a good idea. Stories are of their time. Should I go back to a story ten years from now and cycle in replacement slang? Make the characters hew to some future concept of political correctness? Or incorrectness? If they're infinitely malleable, why bother committing to any single version at all? That's where your story morphs into a video game, and it's a potential pitfall of word processing–all changes are equally easy. That, to me, confuses typesetting with writing. If you want to make a change in fiction, it should be a change you are willing to work to achieve. And if you know that, then the ease of word processing becomes an advantage and not a hazard.

Now I'll contradict myself, proving that there is no one answer for anything. Necronomicon Press will publish (in April 1997) a chapbook version of a short story that has already appeared in *Dark Terrors 2*. The chapbook version is slightly expanded. After I sold it to *Dark Terrors*, I "wrote on it" some more. I wanted a US version of a new story that I could hand to people who ask what I've been doing lately–one that didn't force them to cough up the scratch for an entire imported anthology. It's the same story, but different. The chapbook version has extra stuff.

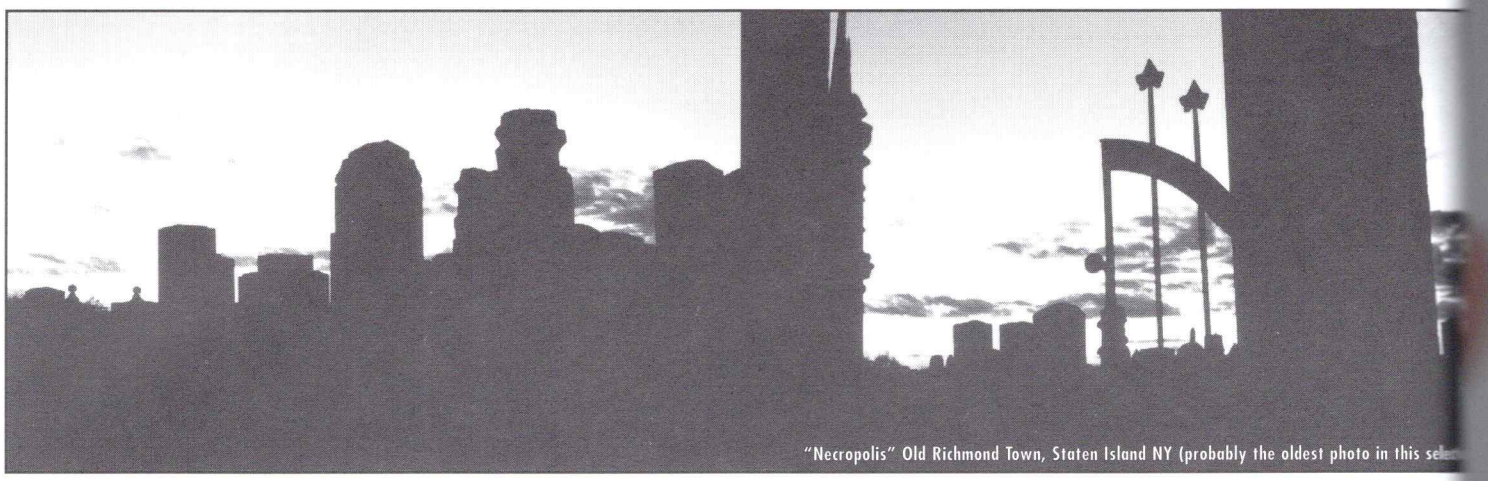
*How were you brought on board the first Crow film?*

I was called by Ed Pressman in late 1991 to do a page-one rewrite (ie., a new draft from scratch) when a first draft and revisions by John Shirley failed to help Pressman secure a studio or production funds.

*I know that over the course of filming* The Crow, *you became friends with Brandon Lee. Can you take us through your version of the accident and the subsequent emotional upheaval that occurred as a result of it?*

It's time to stop carping on the accident, which, as I answer this question, was four years ago. People still sidle up to you in that faux-intimate way and purr, "So what really happened ..?" What really happened was that there was a hideous accident on-set. I was there and saw it happen, and there's not a day that passes in which it doesn't cross my mind.

The most emotional moment I can recall came not when Brandon died, not even at the memorial service later in California, but on the flight back from North Carolina after production was suspended. Tabloid reporters were sneaking onto the backlot and nailing crew members in restaurants. There were a couple of fistfights. It was a siege atmosphere. Some of us stayed in town a few days longer than others because immediately after the accident it was like the evacuation of Saigon. But we finally left. I was flying back with Alex McDowell, the production designer, and Ken Arlidge, one of the cameramen; both friends. We're all sunk into our seats, just wishing the plane would never touch down, that it would keep going until it got someplace where there were no people, no "entertainment magazines," no bullshit on the news. And before the in-flight movie, trailers come on, and sure enough, one of the previews is for *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*. And the whole first class cabin comes alive with: "Isn't that the guy who just got killed? Wasn't he murdered? Wasn't he cursed?" I hope, in your life, you never feel the way we all felt at that moment. What



"Necropolis" Old Richmond Town, Staten Island NY (probably the oldest photo in this sele

we saw around us was not curiosity or sympathy, but a rat-eyed lust for gossip, tongue-clucking disapproval and the kind of ambient smugness that says people who have the arrogance to make movies richly deserve whatever disaster befalls them.

I pretty much gave up funerals and wakes after Brandon's service, for reasons having mostly to do with the ghouls who show up to be seen grieving, the 'coffin riders.' There are better ways to honor the dead. I've said this before: Movies are like war in that war can be hell. You're frequently in some far-flung location where you have to bring in all your own supplies and keep from going nuts. Sometimes there is glory, sometimes there are casualties. But unless you've been there and done it, you have no idea what it is like no matter how many dumb movie magazines you read.

*I know a lot of changes had to occur in the film after Brandon's death, What were some of them and do you agree with the direction the film ultimately went in?*

It was the same direction it had been going when principal photography started, only now it gained the resonance of Brandon's death. Shitcanning the entire film would have been more cost-effective to the money guys, and Alex Proyas did not want to continue until a couple of the actors encouraged the idea that the only thing more depressing than burying Brandon would be to bury Brandon and the movie, which had a chance of standing as legacy. Whether you like the movie or not is irrelevant; put yourself in our position. Once the decision was made to complete the film, three quarters of our original crew put themselves on hold or worked for next to nothing just to be there. Going back gained an almost spiritual urgency. And the final shot of the production was the giant, flaming Crow outline, which seemed like a nice closure until we realized we had to reshoot the disinterment scene from point of view inside the grave. That chilled our freakin' self-satisfied closure, but good.

I knew a lot of people would go to see the film out of morbid nosiness. But that's an opening weekend sort of thing; it burns sometimes hot, always fast. I had no idea people would obsessively come back and watch it over and over. There are, today, at least 20 Crow websites. Think of some of the other films that came out in 1994–are people still talking about *Schindler's List*, or *True Lies*, or *Forrest Gump*? Good or bad, they were forgotten as soon as they won some trophies and got shoved aside to make room for the next blockbuster, and…and here people are still talking about *The Crow*.

I miss little things–looks, lines, or explanations for why some strange-seeming things were there. In the first cut we had, some things were better. I'll give you an example of a microscopic one: In the pawnshop scene when Eric says, "I'm looking for something in an engagement ring," we originally had the camera on Brandon when he said, "Gold." He had the perfect expression; it was a good moment. But in the interests of tightening, we now see a reaction shot of Gideon when Eric says "gold," and the moment is missed, and the scene gains nothing apart from being speedier by a quarter second.

The Reznor song is rhythmed to the action better in the first cut. The bad guys are more individualized. You get to see Funboy totally out of his mind on drugs, basing like a demon, then licking the needle he uses to shoot up Darla. The heart-to-heart scene in Albrecht's apartment had room to breathe. The infamous liquor store robbery by 12 year olds was intact. While we were shooting that scene, the news let us know that a couple of 13 years olds had tried to boost, at gunpoint, a convenience market somewhere in New England. The rough cut, incidentally, was temp-tracked to This Mortal Coil and Gabriel's score to *The Last Temptation of Christ*, in case you hadn't guessed.

One of the most obviously reworked scenes surprisingly works very well – the scene where Sarah speaks to the empty apartment, which was originally dialogue between her and Eric as Eric sits at the fireplace burning all the remnants of his past life. We just removed Eric's lines and played it straight for the most part. It's a bit more obscure, but it works a hundred times better.

*What is your opinion of the franchisement that has occurred with* The Crow*?*

Ed Pressman took on *The Crow* as a franchise from the beginning; he said so in a dozen interviews. Brandon was signed to star in three Crow movies. So all this mawkish card-shuffling about what the "mythology" really means is bullshit. Now it's more about selling collector's cards, and Slurpee cups, and tchotchkes nobody with a brain needs. None of this junk would move without the emotional connection to Brandon. That's commerce. This is, after all, America.

So far, I've turned down writing two Crow sequels and a TV show. That's my choice. The only way I would ever have been willing to tackle a sequel would be if Alex had returned to direct one; then, sure, I'd throw in with him. But I don't have to; he doesn't have to. I've since written two other features for Alex *They are?*

Final drafts on *Dial M For Monster* (by Proyas and Brendan Young), a really grotesque comedy featuring aliens and Mexican wrestlers, and *Book of Dreams* (by Proyas), a surreal pastiche of dream worlds presented as a declassified documentary. *Dreams* is partially shot already. *What in your opinion happened between your script and the finished product of Leatherface?*

We lost a key producer in the very early stages of the project. Jeff Burr, the director, had to swing in on a vine at the eleventh hour with no prep and no down time from his previous feature. And Jeff was not part of the rewrite process–so, with the replacement producer, you have three plans all pulling against each other.

*Were you happy with the way the film came out?*

In that I got a full production gig on the first feature screenplay I ever wrote, I'm happy that it came out at all. Does the movie represent the script? Not really. But I'm past indicting anybody; basically no one is completely happy with the final version as released. The workprint has enjoyed some popularity as a bootleg item, but it's no closer to the script than the release version. Think of it as a foothold; you try to do better with each job, until the next script and the movie made from it ultimately converge. Insofar as that arc, I am getting a little closer to satisfaction on each new project. On the other hand, I heard that the draft I wrote of *Freddy vs. Jason* for New Line–as the fifth writer in a chain of eight or nine so far–has been redrafted into a straight comedy. In some cases, you just accept the crap it and move on.

*Given that Hollywood is such a difficult environment to work in and one that is prone to the raping of a writer's vision, what lures you to continue work there?*

There's no place on Earth you can get paid better just for making shit up. I've heard Hollywood is a sewer, a destroyer of talent, all my life and it just isn't true. You have to understand ground rules, guilds, what titles mean and how expert liars can function without malice. You have to learn how not to take certain spiky things personally, and be reasonably user-friendly to people who consider themselves "more normal" than you…but what wage jobs exist in the world where you don't feel you've blown opportunities, could have done better, or have to put up with assholes now and then? The dynamics of the deal are like armor you wear into battle. If you return from the field alive, you win. It's the Filmmaking Hell scenario again. Some writers are conscientious objectors. Some are just grunts. Some are like Paul The people who still want to believe in what Michael

"The Point Man" Willow Brook Glen (abandoned)

Crichton calls "the 'They Killed My Baby' tradition of writerly whining" in regard to the movie industry should read the book *Monster: Living Off the Big Screen*, by John Gregory Dunne, which is the real deal about the ups and downs of spending eight years to make a movie–not the envious, fantasy jerkoff that is the mainstay of movie crapzines, which are written by outsiders, for outsiders.

The bottom line of working in Hollywood is that the pleasure is equal to the pain, and both can be considerable, but neither is guaranteed. Movies are the artistic medium of this century that reaches the greatest audience, so there's your motivation. And believe it or don't, but it is possible to use the system as much as the system uses you, and if you understand that, then the whole process can be fantastic.

*Out of curiosity, what do you consider to be examples of great film making? What are your Top Ten films?*

I don't have a list, but a pretty good barometer of a "top" film is any film that profoundly changes the way films are done after it. Take *Alien* as a perfect example–it changed everything. I knew everything there was to know about that film before it came out. I'd read every draft of the script and interviewed a lot of the principal cast and crew in 1978. And the first time I saw it complete and assembled, it still blew me away...and pretenders are still trying to imitate it nearly 20 years later. Its progenitor was really *Creature From the Black Lagoon*, a movie I could watch a couple of times a year for the rest of my life, and probably will.

Some recent odds and ends:

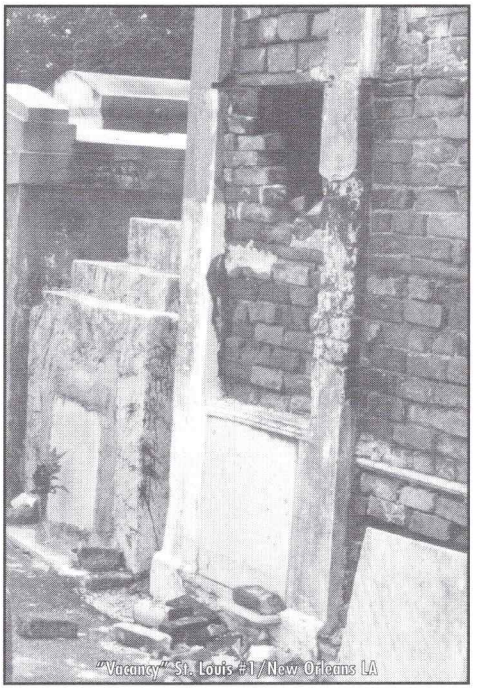
My favorite horror movie of 1994 was *The Road to Wellville*. I've seen it maybe 20 times. Of 1996, *Fargo*, which I saw on Academy Award night (in 1996), which is the best night of the year to go to the movies–it's the only way you can avoid all the Oscar bullshit.

*Seven–or Se7en*–impressed me. In these days of politically-correct sweetness and light, we need more dark movies. I just wish they'd kept the original ending but the reason the ending got changed was thanks to focus group screening polls, which have outlived their usefulness by a couple of decades at least. You spend a year or two on a film and some nitwit who got a free pass has the power to change your ending? Fuck that.

Cronenberg's *Crash* is a great example of a movie that's important even if it is flawed. It's important because it is a film chock-full of automobile accidents and sex–neither of which are designed to appeal to the prurient interests of a 17-year-old. And it is important because it stands as an artistic work, in spite of the Family Values Nazis and their insectile ratings systems.

*Is it possible for one of your stories or books to ever get a fair treatment on film?*

It worked for Michael Crichton and J.G. Ballard...it can happen for me, sure. Has it? It hasn't really had a chance yet. I don't write my fiction while selling the movie rights in my head; nor do I particularly write film work for any other medium. Keep in mind that all of my produced film work has been as a hired gun for material that did not originate with me. *Chainsaw III* was a sequel. *The Crow* was based on a comic book. The *Showtime Outer Limits* I wrote was an original, but it was severely compromised before the first draft was even finished, then butchered by a hack, so by the time it actually got near a camera, it was a crippled, hopeless thing.


"Vacancy" St. Louis #1/New Orleans LA

I'm working on two features right now for which all the basic ingredients were supplied. My job is to mix the ingredients palatably. To turn one-liners into characters, and log lines into a coherent story. I hope.

As for specs, who cares? As Larry Cohen said, "Every asshole in Hollywood has got a spec script in his back pocket." Really titanic assholes have one in each back pocket. Nothing counts unless you get paid for it. As ground rules go, it's a pretty simple proposition, really.

*Would you ever want to see* The Shaft *or* The Kill Riff *be made into a motion picture? Would you want to write the script for them?*

*The Shaft* might be fun to distill. I'm afraid *The Kill Riff* would date at lightspeed no matter what the prevailing musical fashion is. By the time a movie could be written, shot and released, it'd look as outmoded as *Phantom of the Paradise* does now.

*Who would your choice of directors be?*

Val Lewton, but unfortunately, he's dead. I'm kidding. Not about the dead part. Never mind...

*Do you think that anthologies are a good way for readers to be introduced to new writers?*

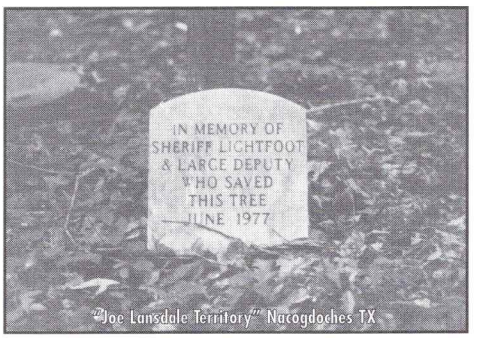
Not a good way, but absolutely the best way. That's why I made sure there were a couple of "first sales" in *Silver Scream*. Mark Alan Arnold was an editor, but nobody knew him as a writer until "Pilgrims to the Cathedral of Sleaze," which title I forced him to shorten. Tobe Hooper got a kick out of getting book credit. Mick Garris' first published short story sale was to *Silver Scream*, "A Life in the Cinema," the story he fondly calls "the cocksucking zombie baby story." Anyone who thinks Mick is a cream-puff, based on some of his film work, should read his short fiction, which is hard to find, but which will knock your dick in the dirt.

*Do you ever get tired of being referred to as the "Father of Splatterpunk?"*

Nope. It's out of my hands. I think the curse of life is that you don't get to choose the thing that makes you immortal–if anything at all. Your worst novel becomes a popular classic. Your most mediocre song is a hit. Nobody uses your chewiest quotes, and the dumbest thing you ever said gets used as a bloc excerpt. The worst photo of you ever taken is the most reprinted. I just shudder to think what the Mother of Splatterpunk might be like. Think of the children!

*In the realm of horror fiction, who do you think is out there plying their craft and doing it well? Who do you read?*

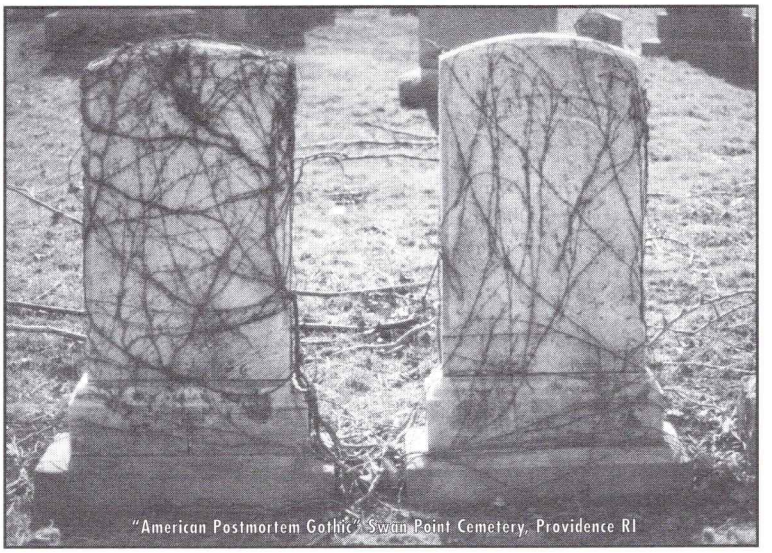
Sometimes I get so fed up I say, "I don't read horror anymore," which isn't strictly true, and is bad, besides, to dismiss it that way is to automatically corral it into



"Joe Lansdale Territory" Nacogdoches TX

the kind of cut-and-dried "genre" I hate. It's still the best when it comes at you unheralded, without the "horror" label plastered all over it, because it has a better chance to surprise you. There's a plot twist a third of the way through John Farris' *Sacrifice* that knocked me flat and left me gasping; there's another key revelation of that sort in *Wildwood*. I like Farris. Sometimes he seems to be the only adult out there writing scary stories for the mainstream. I just discovered William Browning Spencer. I enjoy Thomas Ligotti and Michael Blumlein. I devoured the new, "lost" Shirley Jackson collection, and am prodigiously reading every volume of North Atlantic's ten-volume Theodore Sturgeon omnibus as the books come out. I have a decided taste for the erotically-charged stuff produced by the Reform School Riot Grrls of horror–where's my list? Poppy Brite, Christa Faust, Kathe Koja, Lucy Taylor, Caitlin Kiernan, Nancy Kilpatrick in her "Amarantha Knight" incarnation (the fact that Christa is my wife has absolutely no bearing on my appreciation of her fiction). If Richard Christian Matheson ever finishes his second collection, I'll read it–probably in an afternoon. Joe Lansdale is an automatic must-read, although I could live quite happily in the absence of any more Hap and Leonard novels, which is what he's been concentrating on recently. Doug Winter needs to finish his damned debut novel so I can read it. Tim Lucas, who wrote *Throat Sprockets*, has

"Amos Leans Over" Stanford Hill Church of Christ



"American Postmortem Gothic", Swan Point Cemetery, Providence RI

just finished his second novel, titled *The Only Criminal*. I'm there. I wish Rod Whitaker–Trevanian–would write another novel; it's been nearly 14 years. I don't know if he died or just switched pseudonyms again.

It's not just the writers you read now, but the writers you consistently return to. Robert Bloch taught an important lesson when he told me that late in life he'd decided not to keep books in his house unless he had read them twice. We must not forget Fritz Leiber, or for that matter, Joseph Payne Brennan, or Gerald Kersh. Right now, in England, Stephen Jones is assembling Karl Edward Wagner's final collection under the title *Exorcism & Ecstasies*. Karl's first collection, *In a Lonely Place,* was one of those books that just picked me up and shook me.

And that's just in so-called "horror." Good thing you didn't ask me about anything else scary ...

*What made you decide to embark on such a daunting task as writing your* Outer Limits Companion*?*

I had no choice. It was either go all the way...or don't go.

*How long did that book take to pull together?*

It was over ten years from first interview to publication of the first edition, which was in 1986. To get to the book version, the publishing world had to be lubed up with an eight-part series in *Twilight Zone Magazine.* Then I redid a "bullet version" of the *TZ* piece for people who could no longer find the book. And I am just now putting the finishing touches on a heavily-revised second edition, for GNP/ Crescendo. This is not the old book with a surplus catch-up chapter tacked on. Every page has added text and corrections. New photos. New layout. Larger format. Higher price. I just hope I can get it out the door this year.

*What prompted you to agree to write your column for* Fango *and why did you to cease doing it?*

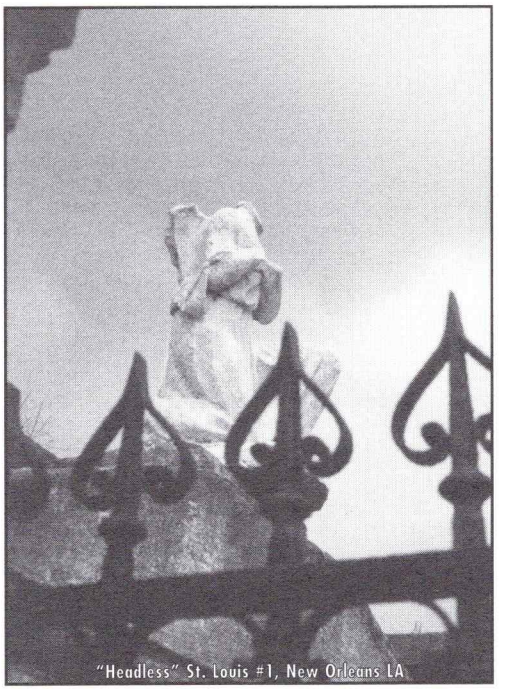
I started out writing columns, and I like editorial writing. Nonfiction writing.

"Raving & Drooling"–the title–was cooked up about 12 years ago when a friend and I decided to write, for *Fangoria,* a pseudonymous column that just arbitrarily ripped the shit out of all comers, indiscriminately. It was satirically intended. It was supposed to be like punk writing. "Raving & Drooling" was also intended as a riddle–the first person to place the reference correctly would get a free subscription to *Fangoria.* That idea died the death it basically deserved.

Ever since I did the two-part *Chainsaw III* "set diary" for *Fangoria,* Tony Timpone periodically asked if I'd do a column. Virtually every horror magazine in business in 1990 asked me for a regular column at one time or another. I quickly calculated that I could spend all my writing time cranking out columns and make very abysmal money indeed. I took Tony up on the standing offer in 1992 based on two things: My need to write nonfiction, and *Fangoria's* readership–250,000, which blew any and all similar competition into the mud. I wrote 40 columns totaling about 80,000 words of text. That's a novel.

I stopped because you could never get far enough ahead on deadlines, and my short story output was eroding. Stories go out into the world and get reprinted, resold, anthologized and collected if you're lucky; people keep reading them. Readers read columns once and that's it. I've said that I wrote the *Fango* column as a two-page spread so people could read it at the newsstand if they resented the cover price of the magazine.

Except for the fact that *Fangoria* is prohibited from printing the f-word, I was never censored or restricted in any way. Tony gave me complete freedom to ramble on about whatever I wanted. Early on, he did change two columns both for the better. I think he



"Headless" St. Louis #1, New Orleans LA

could sense when I wasn't inspired there; I always have trouble with titles.

Presently there's interest in collecting the columns in book form. Tony has graciously told me the door's open at *Fangoria* any time I want to continue. I put the column down, the deadlines evaporated, and I quickly finished seven or eight new stories, two of them novelettes, all of which should be out by the time this interview is read by paying customers.

*What is the present situation with the anthology you're editing,* Look Out He's Got a Knife*?*

It's not an anthology, but a collection of my own stories, and it bit the dust basically when a small press did, and got subsumed into a larger new collection with the provisional title *Crypt Orchids*–another term I got from Bob Bloch, by the way. If the fates are with me, it should be out sometime in 1997.

*Can you tell me a little about how you and Christa Faust met, fell in love and got married?*

We met in New York City, in Linda Ma apartment, and spent lots of time walking a the city in the dead of night. The "love" pa totally out of our control; it overwhelme Christa hauled stakes for Los Angeles to live me and promptly got physically attacked by a of mine; Christa made like Sigourney Weave *Aliens* when she blows the parasite out of th lock...then she and I had a very nice dinner friends. About a year later, we got officially ma three times, the first time in a helicopter a stroke of midnight. For us. The second time w family, and the third, for friends on Hallowee

*What can we expect to see from David J. Sch the near future?*

Ever since writing movies became my "day job," learned not to curse in-work projects by talking m about them. The most perfect assembly can go h bly wrong at the last minute, and in the most a ing way. Anybody who hasn't by now read a s short story of mine hasn't been reading antho Novel #3 is still on hold. The totally-revamped *Limits Companion* will be out, I hope, this year.

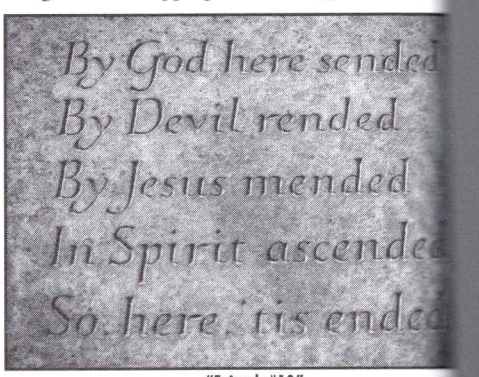
If you're after new stories, check out *Dark Ter* (ed. Stephen Jones), *Love in Vein 2* (ed. Poppy *Lethal Kisses* (ed. Ellen Datlow), *Rage Magazi* (the Valentine's Day 1997 issue), and the new *Midnight Graffiti.*

Let me know what you think of Doug W gigantic new concept *anthology, which will be* Revelations in America (May 1997), *Millennium* everywhere else.

Things I just kicked out the door: A 2000- piece on Karl for the aforementioned *Exorcis Ecstasies*, and an Introduction for Volume 3 o *Prima Books* series of *Outer Limits* novelizations ed by Debbie Notkin. One day, suddenly, you and realize you've got a whole file drawer f odds-and-ends writing like these. It's all to bibliographers crazy.

A Note about the Photographs:

This is a very small cull from over 10 years' wo cemetery photography done all over the U States. Swan Point Cemetery in Providence, R fact where H.P. Lovecraft is buried, Lovecraft's grave marker (paid for by fans year his death) is not very interesting visually. W Brook Glen is a genuinely abandoned grave fallen to ruin in upstate New York. I g Washington Hollow just as they had cleared half the hillside to put in a gas station. Sinc remains were by this late date an inseparable p the mulch of the hill, nothing could be transpl –so they just excavated the dirt and stacked u headstones. The marker concerning "S Lightfoot" sits in front of Joe Lansdale's house, mer gambling den on the outskirts of Nacogdo TX. Poppy Z. Brite deserves a mention for g me through St. Louis #1 in New Orleans (and ing me from stepping on all the hypodermics).




"Epitaph #10"

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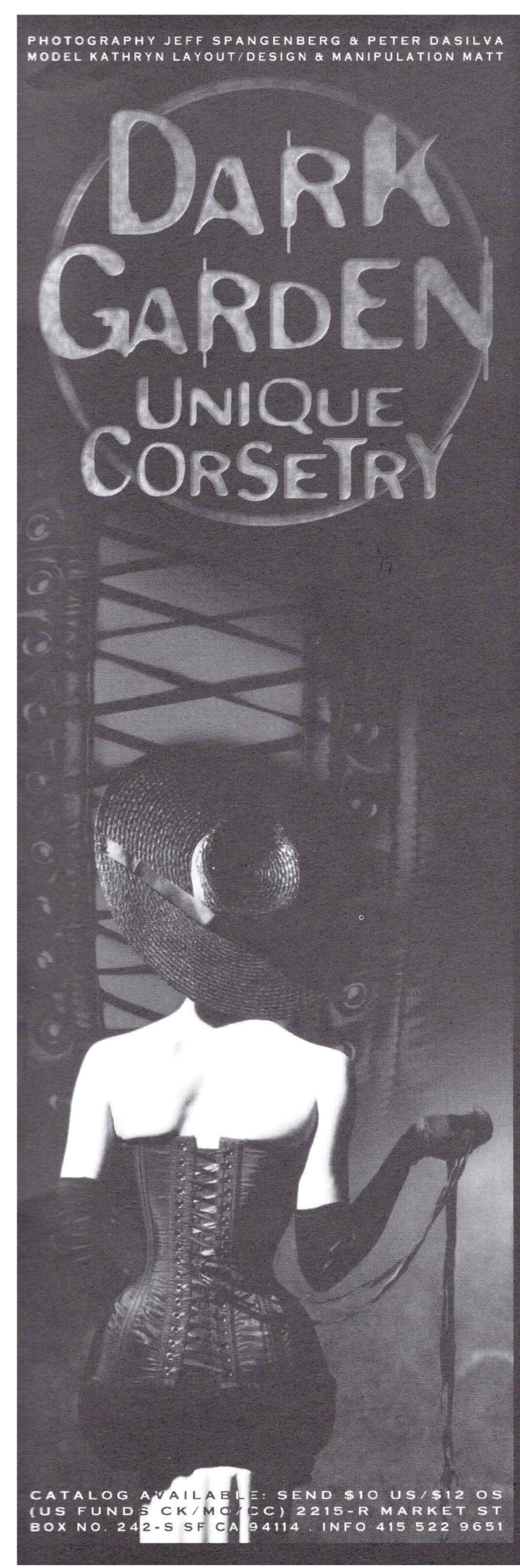
UNIQUE CORSETRY



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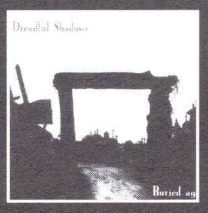

DREADFUL SHADOWS
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EVEREVE
*Seasons*
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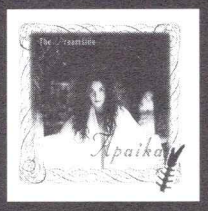

The DREAMSIDE
*Apaika*
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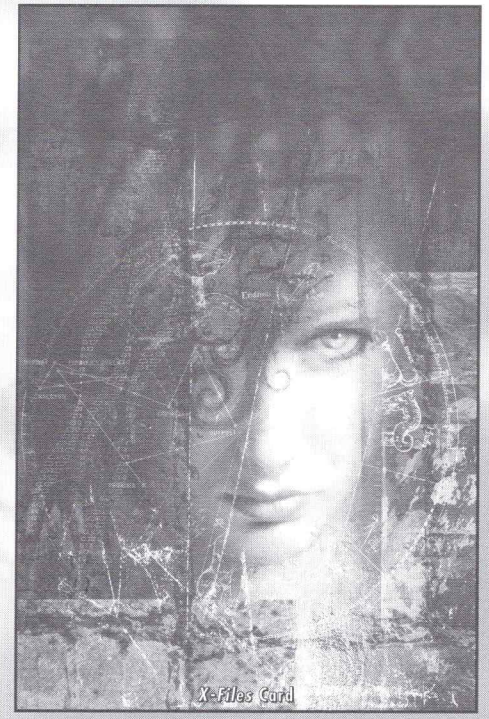
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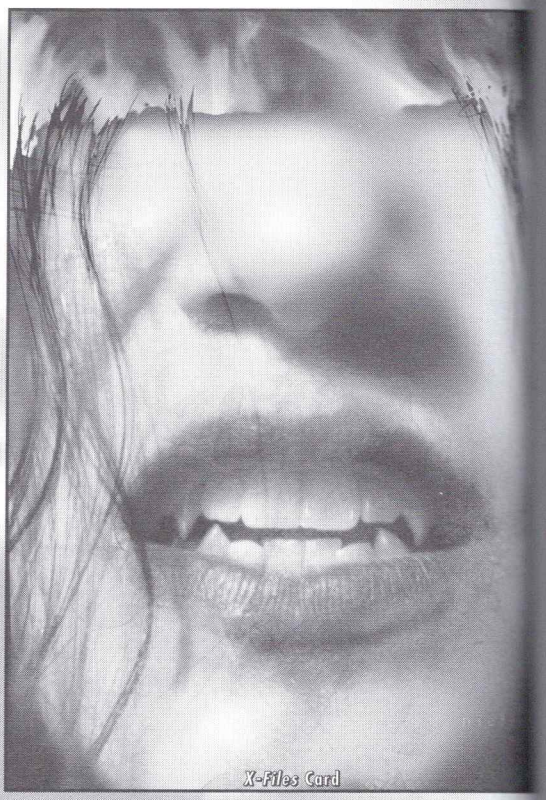
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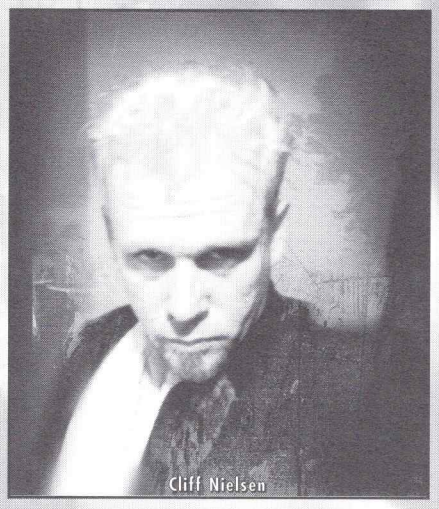
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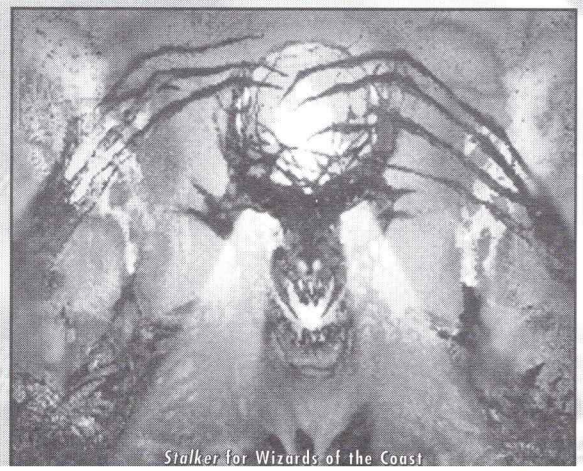
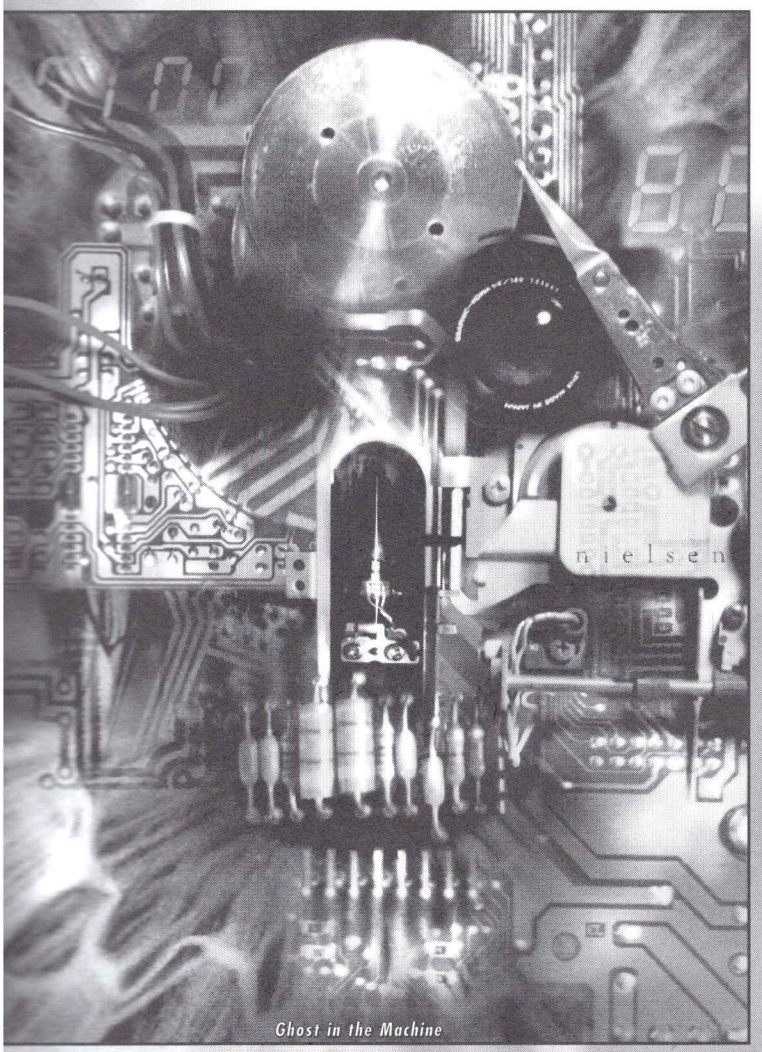
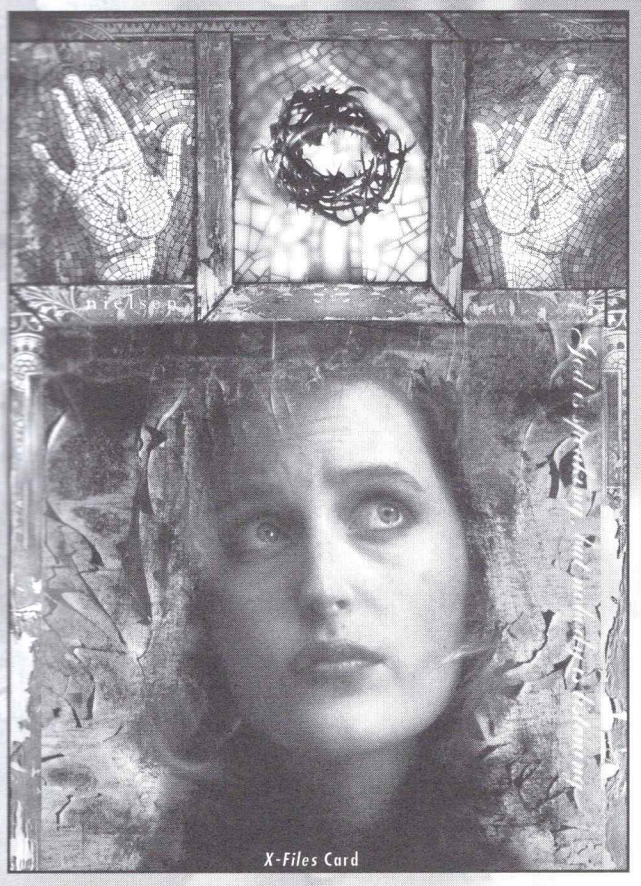

Stalker for Wizards of the Coast



Ghost in the Machine

*Cliff Nielsen is a freelance artist based in Los Angeles, California. His award winning illustrations are a mixture of traditional painting, media experimentation, photography, found objects, digital painting and electronic imaging. His work has earned him accolades from the New York and Los Angeles Society of Illustrators on numerous occasions, Print Magazine's Award of Merit for Packaging Illustration and first place in Harcourt Brace & Company's Book Cover Competition. He was also named a Valedictorian Graduate from Art Center College of Design. His client list reads like a veritable who's who of the illustrator's world including: Twentieth Century Fox, Lucas Arts Entertainment, Marvel Comics, DC Comics, Fleer, Skybox, Bantam Doubleday Dell, Harper Collins Publishing, Tor Books, Ballantine Books, Sierra On-Line, Interplay Gaming, Wizards of the Coast, Honda, LA Gear and Baskin Robbins.*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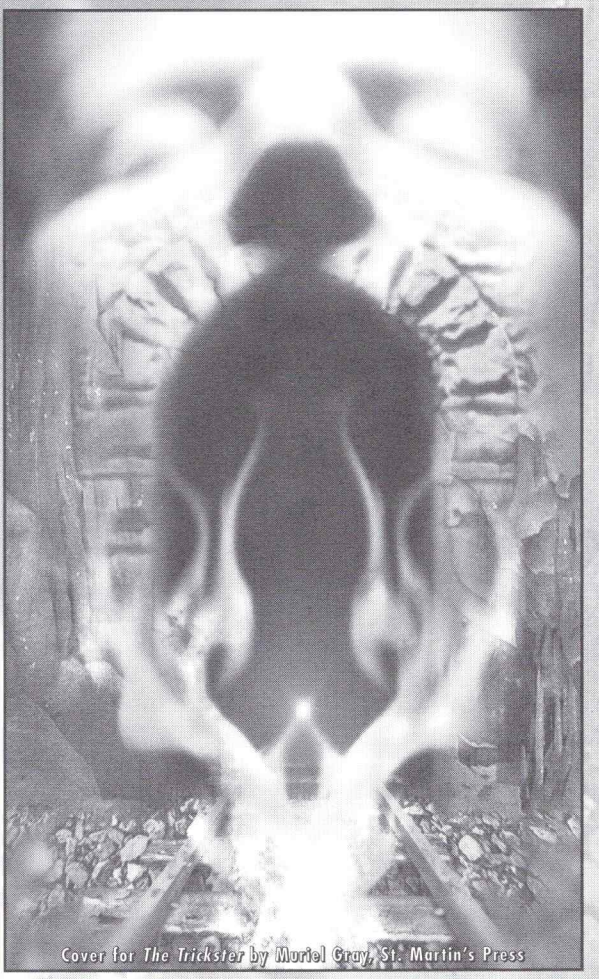
Cover for *The Trickster* by Muriel Gray, St. Martin's Press

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# The Cinematic Autopsy:

## Kaidan • The Spectacle of the Asian Ghost Story

*By Carnell*

The ghost story has long been a standard in the horror genre. The often times formulaic plots of such films as *Ghost Story, 13 Ghosts, House on Haunted Hill* and *The Legend of Hell House* made the things that go bump in the night a staple of late night "creature features" across the land. It would seem that the English and the Americans had the one true voice on the subject since most of what you read in the horror journals only mentioned films made by such studios as A.I.P. and Hammer. However, the rest of the world was also interested in spectral goings-on and, in fact, has a long history of making the ghost story part of their own culture. I remember the first time I saw the Japanese film *Kaidan* which was an anthology of sorts and, quite frankly, scared me a lot. Its visual sense was alien to me but its tales of spirits luring men and women to their untimely deaths was at once familiar and ground breaking. So much so that the film served to redefine what this sub-genre meant to me. As a result of that, I began a search for other films from Asia and found that ghosts truly were global in their impact. Here are a few films I've recently seen that I highly recommended should you desire a video haunting on a cold and rainy night.

*Chinese Ghost Story*
Director: Ching Siu Tung
This now classic film proves that the Asian market pays attention to the stylistic innovations of auteur filmmakers such as Sam Raimi, Robert Rodriguez and Dario Argento. The camera work of this film, its sense of fluidity, the creative use of back-winding, and the marvelous co-mingling of sub-genres makes *Chinese Ghost Story* a true original. Utilizing the classic "mortal in love with a ghost" motif, director Ching Siu Tung (*Witch From Nepal*) pulls out all the stops by infusing Chinese mythology, ghostly goings-on, the living dead inhabiting the space under the floorboards and a spectral matriarch with a forty foot tongue (don't ask...) A lot has been said in the press about *Chinese Ghost Story.* Several critics have marked its originality, creative vision and thematic purity, but for me, the thing that makes this film such a classic is the unabashed sense of fun it exhibits. It's as if all involved had their tongues planted firmly in their cheeks. From the scenes of the hero's humility to the image of an immense tongue flying through the air and winding up its victims like tops, it's obvious that not many concerned are taking this too seriously. (I have been told that there is a cultural relevancy to the tongue.) All in all, *Chinese Ghost Story* is a wonderful film which is beautifully photographed. If you are the type of viewer who skips most foreign films, it is a perfect introductory example of Chinese filmmaking. If you are a fan of Asian cinema and still haven't seen this gem, you are missing out on a unique cinematic experience.

*Evil Dead Trap*
(aka *Shiryo No Wana*)
Director: Toshiharu Ikeda
I had heard a lot of good things ab
*Evil Dead Trap* before sitting dow
watch it. Upon viewing it, I found that alth
this film closely resembles the American sl
film in mechanics, what is readily apparent,
the thing that sets it apart, is the sense of sty
vision the director displays from the initial fra
Late night TV star Nami, who hosts a "sen
your tapes" style show rece
video from one of her viewe
she pops it into the player s
treated (?) to the sight of a wo
who is bound and hung by
wrists from the ceiling. As
watches, a man's hand appears
slices a gaping wound down
victim's abdomen. Of course, N
is horrified...only not so hor
that she hits the "OFF" butto
call the cops. Next, we see
videotaped killer slowly (and
excruciating detail) inserting
knife into his victim's eyeball
pulling up. The first thing
comes to mind when seeing
sequence is the much touted,
ultimately fraudulent snuff
series, *Guinea Pig*. Nami
several of her co-horts follow
landscape shown in the video
attempt to find the location of
video's taping. Next
Victimsville... Our intrepid g
follows all of the clues and
comes upon a dilapidated
factory site which matches
video perfectly. So, they do what
red blooded, soon-to-be fatality
they cut the lock on the
and go inside. The rest of
film is merely a stylistic take on
standard slasher fare. This is not neces
ly a bad thing, mind you. *Evil Dead Trap's* stre
lies in its originality of vision
technical proficiency. This is one good looking
I won't give away the ending, but let's just say
it has something to do with a split personality
the "birth" of a manifestation of same.

*Horror!*
(aka *Kazuo Umezu's Terror Zone*)
Director: Hikari Hayakawa
This is an odd little film. Actually, it is made u
two short films, *Return to Darkness* and *St*

*Heart*, respectively. The first short is a black and white film about a young woman who travels to live with her husband in his ancestral home. Upon arrival, she finds a beautiful house and a loving husband. She settles in and, as if on cue, she starts getting weird vibes from the house. She suspects that she is being watched at all times and becomes convinced that the house is haunted. Sounds pretty normal so far... The thing is that, for all of the obvious talent that went into making this film (which is admittedly very well done and truly scary), the EC Comics ending pulls the entire narrative up short and hinders the film from living up to the potential displayed for the bulk of the film. Next, we are offered a film which is set at a girl's slumber party as they begin to tell each other ghost stories. One girl's tale is more than a little personal as she relates the story of her best friend and the role that girl played in saving the narrator's life. Our story teller had a bad heart and, with the inadvertent death of her friend, she was soon cured by the anatomical gift she was given. Back at the slumber party, the girls sit stunned by the story they've just heard, but their terror isn't over quite yet. Another guest at the slumber party has come to reclaim a gift she gave not so long ago. Man, talk about bein' an Indian Giver. The thing about this film is that it is one of the rare occasions when a filmmaker is able to establish a truly frightening atmosphere while not sacrificing any of his vision by editing sequences out that some would find objectionable, thereby bowing to the political correctness that runs so rampant in media these days. His choice of camera angles, selection of peripheral movement, visceral gut punches via the Special FX, and wonderful cast all help to make moments of real horror. All in all, I heartily recommend *Horror!* It's some of the most inventive filmmaking I've seen in a long time.

*Sweet Home*
(aka *Suiito Homu*)
Director: Kiyoshi Kurosawa

The thing that drew me to this fun film was the fact that Special Makeup FX legend Dick Smith was responsible for the FX. Basically, *Sweet Home* is a Japanese version of some of the haunted house films which were popular in the late seventies and early eighties such as *The Amityville Horror, The Evil, Legend of Hell House,* etc., only updated with a quality cast, an aesthetically pleasing look and dynamite Special FX. A TV crew (what–again?) travels to visit the mansion of famed painter Ichiro Mamiya only to find a lot more than they bargained for. It seems that Lady Mamiya accidentally killed her small child when she lit the furnace in which the baby was playing (Hey...it could happen...). Anyway, this incident drove Lady Mamiya off the deep end, so much so that she took to kidnapping children in the area and murdering them so her baby would have playmates. Years pass, Lady Mamiya buys the farm as does her husband. Their house becomes the stuff of local legend which purports it to be haunted. So, it is into this tableau that our intrepid TV crew wanders in. This film is so cool, I don't want to ruin it any more than I already have. Suffice it to say that *Sweet Home* is one of the best haunted house films I've seen in quite some time. The acting, specifically by Nobuko Miyamoto (*A Taxing Woman* & *Tampopo)* raises this film above what you might expect from a genre film. I especially loved Dick Smith's amazing creation of Lady Mamiya, back from the grave and **really** pissed off. Her look is one of the more inventive in horror filmdom.

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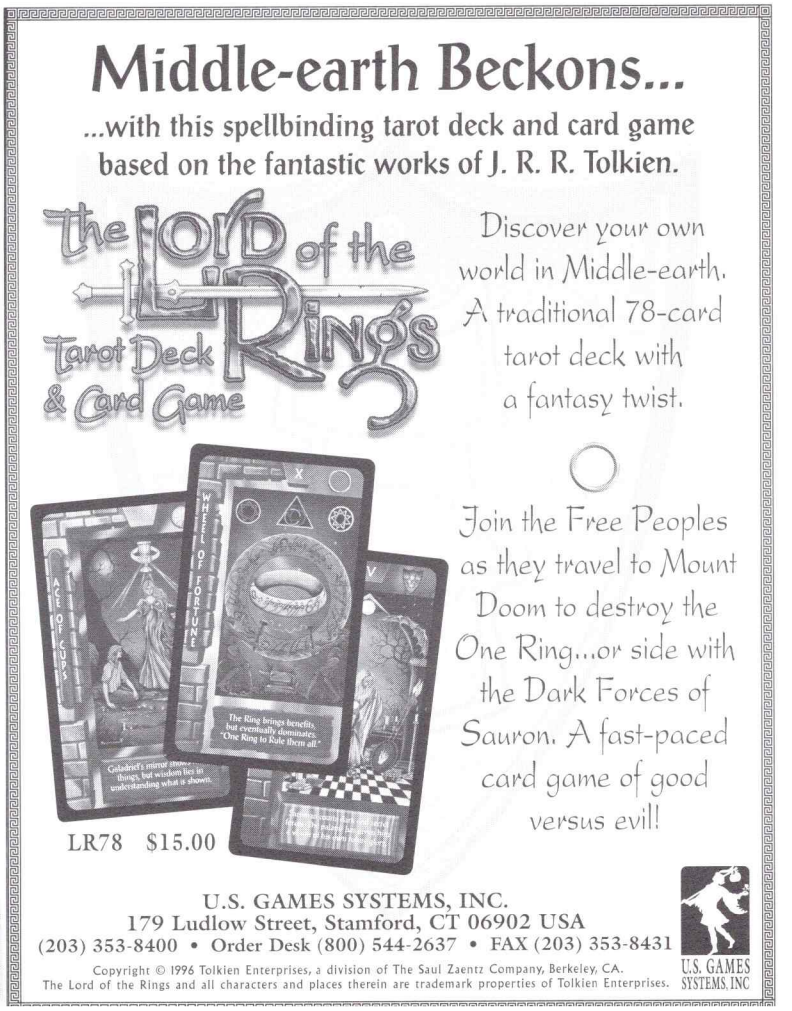
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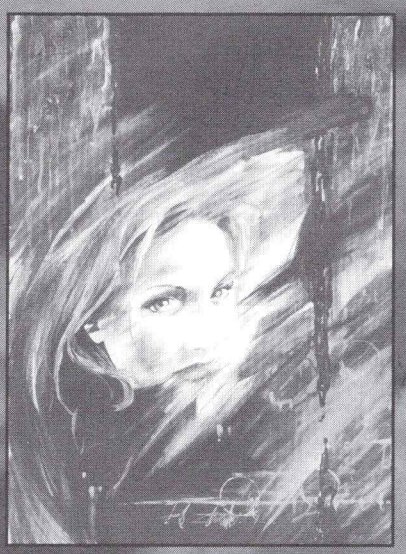
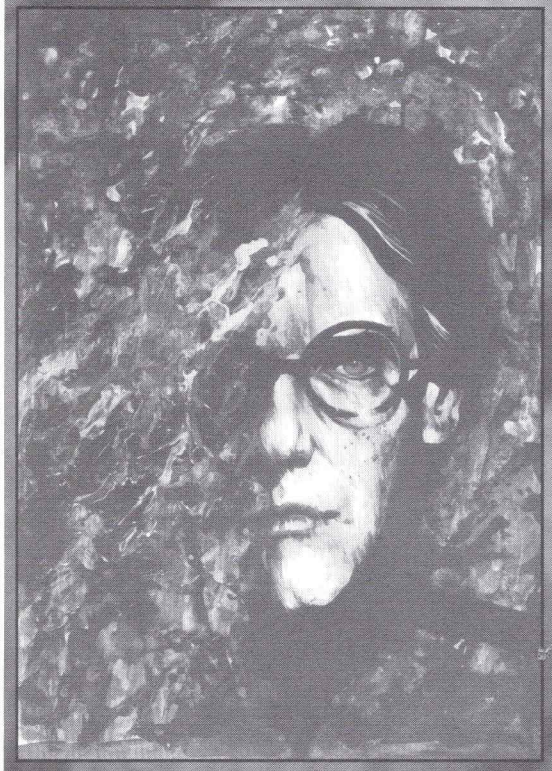
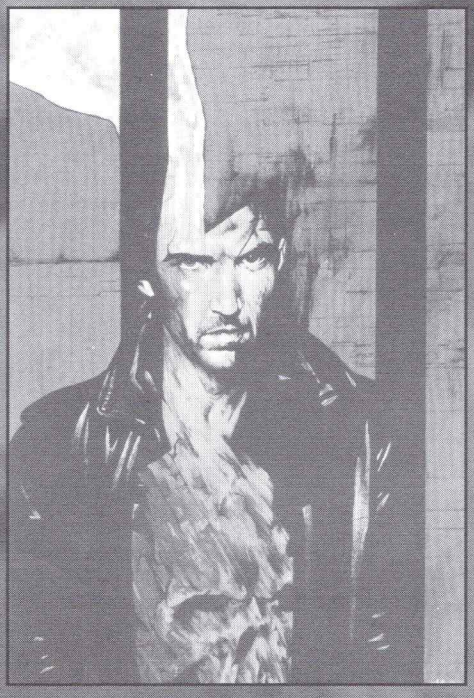
# Rik Rawling







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# The Brickbats

So, I'm leaving the mailbox one day, leafing through the assorted boxes, letters and vampire haiku (don't ask…) when I come across this envelope. In it is a press kit and a CD entitled, *Sing You Dead.* Since I had never heard of them, I popped the disc into my stereo upon returning to the office. As with most CDs sent to us, I had no idea what to expect. The first thing I noticed was that it wasn't your typical spooky band. The music was fast, bouncy and damn enjoyable. A lot of it reminded me of some of the music coming out of the old D.R. days by groups whose names all began with the word THE... The music was infectious and catchy while reveling in its paper skeleton-esque Halloween trappings. As the disc grew on me more and more I took a look at the lyrics:

*Black around the bodies at the funeral party, the graveshakers are out tonight*
*Walking corpses run to the moribund fun to exhume the doom of new life.*
*You get a number for a name and you take all the blame for the all controlling state.*
*Too many times you've forgotten your mind, so get up for the Two Minute Hate.*
*- We Are the Dead*

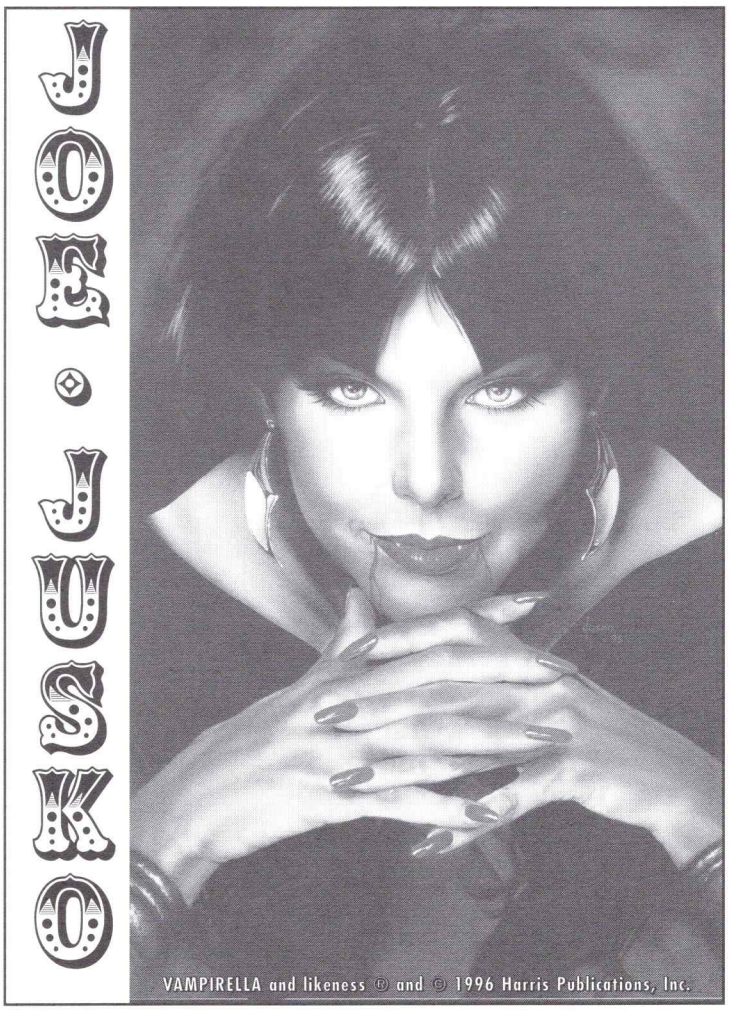
What I like most about this band is the undeniable sense of glee and the unwillingness to be held to any one genre. Their music is fast, but spooky. It's quirky, but possesses an uncontrollable sense of melody. It's hardcore fun with a backbeat that could kill your sister, Kate.
They are The Brickbats and I'm won over... a fan. What can I say?

*How did you guys meet and what was your first gig?*
D.W. Friend: We met during a three car pile-up. As it just so happens, we all died the next day of natural causes–in our sleep. Very peacefully. As luck would have it, all three hearses crashed into The Clubhouse, in Bathory, New Jersey.
Paul Morden: Hurling our lifeless, already decaying bodies on to the stage with the likes of Blanks 77 and The Pist.
Corey Gorey: No one was surprised.
D.W.: Tough crowd, Jersey.
*Your music strikes me as a combination of early eighties power pop, Cramps style rockabilly with a little surf guitar thrown in all wrapped up in a twisted horror movie motif. Do you think that assessment of you is a fair one?*
D.W.: Huh, I never heard of any of those bands.
CG: I don't surf.
*What bands were a big influence on you growing up?*
PM: Prince. No, on second thought, Miss Lilian Gish, though I'm not sure she actually sang. Let's just say that she influenced me.
D.W.: Debrah Harry and her Blondie.
CG : I could say Kiss, but I really don't feel like it.
D.W: I guess you did.
*Who does the bulk of your writing?*
PM: Mr. Gorey does.
D.W.: We could just tell them the truth.
PM: We steal it?
D.W.: Yes.
*Do you consider yourself a part of the Goth subculture? Are you comfortable with that?*
CG: Fishnet on my arms is not comfortable, but considering that we're a popular music singing group…
D.W.: Singing sensation.
CG: It really doesn't matter either way. Punks think we're too goth, goths think we play too fast, the rock people hate the makeup. The makeup people hate the clothes. So, I don't think we're ever comfortable.
PM: Didn't the Goth scene take over Rome?
D.W.: What are you talking about?
*You periodically perform covered in sheets. Tell me a little bit about that.*
PM: It was a dark and stormy night…
D.W.: It just feels better against my nude body.
CG: All Nude?
D.W.: So get out those dangerous dollars!
PM: We're doomed to walk this plane as ghosts, so it's appropriate. Don'tcha think?
*Ok...who's hotter? Vampira or Elvira?*
CG: Lisa Marie in "Ed Wood" as Vampira is better than the real one, but that's in the deep voice; but Elvira's got that crazy wig hat on her head, and she makes me laugh. Every time I see her, I just laugh and laugh…Oh, how I love to laugh.
PM: I hear the grass is greener on the other side.
D.W.: I'd like to answer this question with a story. When I was a little boy, I used to look at pictures of Elvira without any clothes on. [looks around] That's it. End of story.
*Do you guys watch a lot of horror film? What kind?*
D.W.: Kiss Meets The Phantom of the Park always scares the pants off of me.
CG: You're always naked! Everyday! What's the matter with you?
D.W.: Because that's the way God brought me into this world, and that's the way He wants me.
PM: Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things.
CG: I'm a sucker for romantic comedies.
D.W.: That's not horror, though.
CG: Yeah, I know. (laughter all around. Elbows in ribs.)
*You appeared on* USA's Up All Night*? What was that like?*
PM: Hurry up and wait.
CG: D.W. loved the buffet. He pulled me over to his pasta primavera, and he said, "Corey, this is my favorite part about show business."
*Who was the host?*
D.W.: Rhonda Shear. And she touched my knee.
CG: And then I touched Paul's knee. And it was bony.
*Is Rhonda Shear a total bim or what?*
PM: A what? A who?
CG: Yes, she was in *Bim Skala Bim.*
D.W.: I do believe I am Rhonda Shear. And I am offended by your question.
CG: I am not offended. What about you Paul?
PM: I am also Rhonda Shear.
*Where do you see The Brickbats being in five years?*
D.W: Las Vegas
PM: Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina.
CG: Releasing our box set, and opening for Ratt's reunion tour.
PM and D.W.: We like Ratt.
CG: Only we're getting some South American percussionists and employing all six jilted Siouxsie guitarists.
*Any parting words?*
D.W.: Spend all your parents' money on us.
CG: Spend all of our money on your parents. Take them out, they'll like that. It's on us.

By Carnell

The first thing you notice is the fluid motion of the creature's painting onto the canvas. You can almost see the animals which stand majestically against a lush jungle backdrop breathe. The flesh of the men and women portrayed look as if they'd been plucked from the most feverish dreams of Robert E. Howard or Edgar Rice Burroughs. Not since the great Frank Frazetta has a painter been able to not only capture the fantasy world of these authors, but add a sense of movement which most artists can only dream about. His touch is deft, his style uncontested. He is an artist whose time is only now coming to blossom. With his latest Harris Comics release, *Vampirella Blood Lust*, his impact on the serial art field has come to a full fruition. Bringing his formidable background in law enforcement into play, Jusko is someone to watch. He puts a unique spin on the ball by utilizing an eye that has seen drama and tragedy. He, and his art, will bring you to other worlds, escort you into the dark realms of the heart, for he is an elusive kind of artist. He is a Painter.

*As a kid, what was it about art and drawing that lured you away from the normal activities of being a kid and warranted you spending so much time practicing and sketching?*
I grew up in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in Alphabet City and, back in the early to mid sixties, it wasn't that great of a neighborhood. There weren't a whole lot of kids around to be friends with. So, I found that I spent a lot of my time up in my apartment drawing. I would just while the hours away just drawing and drawing and drawing. I found it to be a good escape from the area that I grew up in.
*At that time, who were the artists that you gravitated towards?*
Well, I guess my earliest exposure to art was my older brother, Danny, who is nine years older than me. I used to watch what he did and say, "I could do that" and I would try it. I would draw stuff off of the TV screen when I was five or six years old. Then, when I was seven or eight, there was a kid selling second hand comic books in a playground near my house and I bought a couple of them. One of the first books that I bought was *Avengers #57* with artwork by John Buscema in it. Even at seven or eight years old I was completely taken by this guy's artwork and he was probably my earliest influence, and my greatest to date in my own work.
*Later on, how influenced were you by the work of people like Frank Frazetta? I see a lot of his work in some of your paintings.*
Frazetta was an influence on just about everybody who grew up with an affinity for fantasy or science fiction art. Back in the mid seventies, when the first Ballantine book came out, I was a sophomore in high school and that book really brought Frazetta into the mainstream and influenced a whole bunch of people. I remember when I was a kid I couldn't afford to buy the books, but I would go into book stores and rip the covers off of the paperbacks and put the books on the shelf again. I would collect the full collection of old Frazetta paperback covers. He was a big influence as far as power and dynamics goes, but not as far as technique because there really is nobody who could do what Frank does, the way Frank does it. Anytime you do, you end up looking like a bad Frazetta rip-off. If you try to incorporate his compositional elements or his way of capturing tension in a figure I think it's really beneficial to you.
*I was going to say you end up looking like Boris Vallejo then. [laughs]*
Boris was also a big influence on me when I started painting because he works very tight and very clear. His technical ability is something I've always really admired. I've always tried to combine a little bit of both: the strength and power of John Buscema's drawings and Frazetta's paintings with the more technically tight aspects of, say like a Boris Vallejo. I've tried to get a melding of the two.
*I think your work does that because it seems like a moment captured in time where as, in my opinion, Frazetta was always in motion and Vallejo seemed posed.*
Frazetta came from more of a comic book background, you have to understand, so he was used to putting movement and dynamics into his figures. Boris is more classically trained. With paperbacks and such, they tend to go for more of a quiet, illustrative look, than the more action oriented work. So, it's easy to see how the two of them differ, and why they differ.
*Did you attend any art school?*
I went to Art and Design High School in New York City. It's the only high school of its type in the country. It's a public high school, but its a vocational school that gears its junior and senior years toward a career in art. I would say more than half of the curriculum would be art classes. I majored in illustration and had an advertising minor. Bernie Krigstein, who used to draw the old EC comics, was one of my teachers.
*So, you knew right out of the gate what you wanted to do.*
I was fortunate. I knew from a really early age that this is what I wanted to do. I couldn't not draw. Any spare moment I had I was drawing. While whatever friends I did have were out playing baseball or football, it was just my passion to sit and draw. It's hard when you're a kid and other kids don't have that sensibility or that interest, because the majority of young boys are into baseball and football. While I enjoyed [sports], drawing was a passion. I've told people before, if I went out and played ball every day, I don't think I'd be playing for the Yankees today, so I guess I made the right choice.
*Someone once mentioned to me that you, for a time, were a police officer.*
Yes, I was a New York City cop in the early to mid eighties.
*Did that have any impact on your work?*
Not really. They were two separate entities. I had interests when I was a kid: one was art and the other was being a cop. My favorite TV shows were *NYPD*, *Police Story* and stuff like that. I had broken into the field right out of high school. I was kind of lucky, Howard Chaykin and became an assistant for about months and, in that time, sold a cover to *Heavy Metal*, then I did some work for Marvel, but I wasn't making whole lot of money doing it back then. I didn't know whole lot and, looking back, I'm amazed that they actually paid me for some of the stuff I did. It's really awe and a few of my friends had taken the police test, we're like eighteen years old, and a few years later, they c me. At the time, it seemed that, since I wasn't making great a living doing the would take the police since I had a big interest anyway. I would do that time, and whatever time I had, I would do free lance work on the Then, when I retired g into art full time again. was the plan at least. about two or three years realized that art was what I wanted to do.
*I would think that have a really big impact only on the way you look people, but on the way looked at any given situa seeing the drama there.*
I grew up as a street from the Lower East Side so when I was a cop stuck me into the type neighborhoods and nomic environment that grew up in. I could relate to the people I dealing with on a day day basis. I worked in Apache up in the South Bronx. Being as how I wa n't totally alien to the those people were living didn't have that much of impact, it didn't change that much or open my to too much that I had really experienced alre It did make me a lot more compassionate toward people that I dealt wi than the guys I worked with who came from Long Island and had never experienced that before.
*Was making the decision to leave that field a difficult one*
It's pretty scary because [I was] giving up security a




## Code of the Badge
## Discipline of the Brus
### By Carnell

stability and going into something that I wasn't sure was going to succeed at. I mean, I had gotten some work when I was younger and I knew I was lucky to break in that early. If I'd broken in today, at the same age, knowing what I knew then, I wouldn't get any work because the entry level talent has risen so dramatically in the last ten years so that some of the guys coming in, just breaking in, are just incredible.

*Well, you're no hack yourself... [laughs]*

Thanks. I was talking about back then. If you look at the early work, I was really in the learning phase. I had never had a painting lesson. I was teaching myself to paint by trial and error. I was lucky. I was really lucky that the guys who were hiring me saw something in my work that they felt showed promise.

*What can you tell me about the mini-series* Cops: The Job?

Yeah. Larry Hama, who was one of the editors up at Marvel and who was also writing *The Nam* which was a real popular book at the time, had wanted to do a very realistic police series. Since I was an ex-cop and a friend of his, he called me up and asked if I wanted to co-write it with him. The two of us had talked on numerous occasions about how poorly police procedure and actions had been written in comic books and how illogical a lot of their behavior was. So, we figured that there would be some interest in doing a real life cop drama. We did a four issue mini-series and based a lot of what happened in the books on things that had happened to me when I was a cop. A lot of the characters were based on people that I had worked with. All of the dialogue and technical aspects of the book were completely accurate. We got tons of mail from cops all over the world who were so impressed with how accurate the book was and how realistic the depiction of off-duty and on-duty relationships were. Unfortunately, it wasn't a super hero book. It didn't get a whole lot of promotion or exposure and didn't go any further than that, but I'm really proud of it.

*Did you do the interior art as well?*

No, that was done by Mike Harris. I simply co-wrote it.

*What drew you to the work you did based on the writings of Edgar Rice Burroughs?*

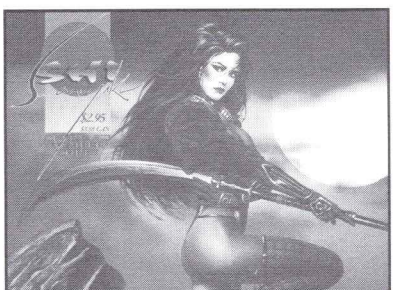
Friedlander Publisher Group called me after I had done the Marvel Masterpiece card set and asked me if I would be interested in doing a card set for them based on a "Joe Jusko's barbarians and babes" type of thing. So, that was the original premise. A little while after that, they had begun negotiating for both the Robert E. Howard and the Edgar Rice Burroughs licenses. Mike Friedlander, who was a big fan of my *Savage Sword of Conan* covers, gave me a call and asked me if I would be interested in doing either Howard or Burroughs. I don't know how many *Conan* covers I had done, but I was kind of *Conan*-ed out at that point. I didn't know if I could do much more with the character, but I had never done Burroughs. I'm also a big wild life art fanatic, especially big cats. I just saw this as an opportunity to do a wide array of different work especially because Burroughs went from the *Tarzan* books to *Mars* books and the other different science fiction that he had written. I thought it would be a perfect vehicle for me to expand.

*I'd like to ask you about a quote I read of yours. You said, "I find, we, as artists, see things differently than the average person. The power of observation helps. When I go to a movie, I might look at the way the light is hitting an object or where the secondary light source is coming from. What's strange is that I don't even realize I'm looking for that. I think everybody sees these details but few absorb them." Do you find that the observation of the artist, at a certain point, becomes so innate that even he does not notice it?*

It takes some training early on. You have to learn not to look at things but to actually see them, that's one thing that young artists don't have. When you see samples at conventions, they don't really see things the way they are in relationship to other objects or spacial relationships. That's something you have to train your eye to see. You have to learn to see shapes instead of details first. You have to learn to see lighting before you see detail. The way I compose a piece, and the way most people compose pieces who have had some experience, is to block in the major shapes first to get a pleasing composition. Yeah, I tend to look at everything and see how light is hitting it, how it's reflecting off [of it]. My interest is piqued by details like that, at this point, because I know all of the basics and now there are so many subtleties that you have to pick up on to add some realism to your work, and I think, after a while, it becomes second nature and you don't even realize that you are doing it. I do it with everything I watch on TV or in the movies. I am constantly looking at compositions, how things are lit, where shadows fall and how they fall, how dark a shadow is on a white object as opposed to a dark object… You start to absorb all of that the longer you do it and, after a while, it does becomes second nature and you don't even realize that you are doing it.

*Do you find, as an example, in film, that you sometimes get lost in that?*

I've lost track of stories sometimes just by examining cinematography, especially old black and white movies. That's an art in itself, the way those movies were lit. As soon as you colorize them, you destroy all the work those guys did in lighting those movies, because those movies were never meant to be in color. I understand the purpose behind that is because young kids won't watch a black and white movie. So, if colorizing *The Maltese Falcon* will get them to watch it, then great. You can always turn the color off on it and watch it the way it was meant to be watched. I constantly find myself losing track of what's going on in movies because I am examining what's up on the screen.




*Do you also find that movies or TV shows become favorites, basically, because of the way the cinematography is handled?*

Sometimes. My favorite TV shows were always character driven though. My favorite TV show of all time was a show called *Wiseguy* with Ken Wahl. It was brilliantly written, you really felt for the characters and I could watch those shows over and over again. I have every episode on tape. I think in order to sustain an interest in a show, it has to be character driven. You can appreciate the visuals for what they are, but to sustain interest, there has to be a little more depth than that.

*The point of my question was that I know that I have some favorite films that I know are horrible, but there are these isolated moments that are so cool...*

Oh, absolutely. I'm a big fan of the old spectacle movies. One of my favorite movies is *Spartacus* because of the scope and the grandeur of it, I love seeing that stuff. Demetrius and the Gladiators, the arena scenes and the Coliseum scenes are just spectacular. To see the panoramas and the composition is just brilliant. I could watch them over and over again just for the detail. So, I definitely agree with that.

*Do you think that an artist must be an active observer at all times in order to make his work ring true?*

I believe that the best artists are. In order to draw somebody sitting down, you have to know the way the body moves when they sit. They sit in a chair, not on a chair. If somebody is standing, knowing where the weight is on the body, as I mentioned before, how shadows fall and where they fall.

*I'd like to get your reaction to the following statement: American comics have fallen short of their potential.*

It goes in cycles. The type of comic that was done in the late eighties to a few years ago, is dying out now. One of the things that I found real distressing over the past ten years was that there was a lot of people, because of the growth in the industry in the mid-eighties, that [had forgotten] good drawing ability. And there were a lot of people working who really forgot to learn the basics. They just wanted to break in, and that seems to be changing. There are a lot of really, really talented [people] in the industry now. A lot of guys who were getting by just on riding the crest of what was going on ten years ago have fallen by the wayside and the guys who could really draw are left. In order to maintain the industry, it's going to have to grow a little bit more and have a little bit more depth to it than it has had.

*Who do you consider to be great artists in the comic field?*

There are a lot of guys I like who are working these days for all different reasons. I like Ron Garney a lot. I think Ron Garney does incredible work. I like Mark Schultz. I like Mike Mignola. I like Alex Ross. I like Alan Davis. Just off the top of my head, I'm sure I'm going to leave out a bunch of guys whose work I really admire.

*The Mike Mignola statement is interesting to me because his work seems to be so stark whereas yours is so lush.*

But, again, it's going back to what I admire about the shadows, the shapes, and the compositions. His work is very, very strong compositionally, mood wise, and volume-wise. He puts in just enough detail to show you what's going on and everything is accurately drawn. It's wonderful work. It really is.

*You earlier mentioned* The Maltese Falcon. *Would you ever be drawn to doing a film noir, sort of a* Sin City *kind of thing?*

I wouldn't mind it. You have to do a little bit of everything. I mean you have to [challenge] yourself every couple of years to keep from being bored and to keep other people from being bored with you, which is why I went from covers to trading cards and now I'm doing some story telling for Harris. I'm doing a fully painted *Vampirella* book for them. That's something new for me and, I think, it would be new for people who follow my work. After a while, if you see the same thing over and over again, there's nothing special about it anymore and you can really fall into a rut especially with your own work. You know you can do it so you just routinely chop it out. That's something I really don't want to do. I'm too harsh a critic of my own work to fall into that kind of rut.

*Are there any topics that you would never want to address in your art?*

I tend to gravitate away from really sexually

explicit material and really excessively violent stuff. I don't think there is any reason to have insertion scenes in a comic book.

*So, we won't see you doing a* Faust *book...*

I doubt that. You don't really need to see all of that to get it across. I'm doing a *Vampirella* book now and there're lots of battle scenes, vampires, and people getting their throats ripped out, but it's not really graphic. I tend to stay away from that. There is one page where, I guess, I got a little too graphic with some of the violence, but you don't really need that to indicate what is going on. I've seen stories recently with barbarian rape scenes where it looks like a centerfold to Hustler. I don't think that is really appropriate. I couldn't justify myself doing that.

*Since the majority of your work is painted, have you ever wanted to dabble in other mediums such as air brush or pen and ink?*

When I broke in, I was doing just about anything to get work. I penciled and inked a few covers for Marvel and I inked a couple of jobs over [pencil's by] Mike Vosburg and John Buscema early on, but I tend to see things, at this point, in terms of half tones and shades. I find that if I work in black and white now, I over render everything because my eye just isn't trained that way anymore. I've tried it. I'm just not that comfortable with it. If I had some time to go back and play with it, it might be fun to do, but I'm very insecure about it at this point.

*Do you consider yourself to be a comic artist, an illustrator, or a fine artist?*

I consider myself an illustrator, I guess. I hate distinguishing between fine artists and illustrators because, somehow, if you are an illustrator you're not an artist. You're a commercial type machine. It's all art. Illustration is just art used to sell something or to tell a story. The idea of the angst ridden artist sitting in his studio waiting for inspiration to come is a little passé at this point. Just because you do it commercially, professionally or vocationally doesn't make you any less of an artist than somebody who suddenly jumps up from his bed one day and starts slushing paint on a canvas.

*If a company came to you and offered you autonomy on your own book right now...a) would you want to write it? and b) what would it be about?*

To do whatever I wanted to do, huh? I'd probably want to write it. If it was to be my personal vision obviously I think I'd have to have total control over it. As to what it would be about? I would have to give some thought to that because there are so many things that I haven't done yet, so many interests that I have. Off the top of my head... I don't know. I've done a little bit of everything already. I'm really into wildlife art and wildlife conservation, big cats and stuff. It would probably be something along those lines. I'm not sure if it would be incorporated into a fantasy type setting or it would would be a straight ecological type thing, but it would definitely incorporate a lot of those aspects in it.

*You're doing a lot of work for card companies. Do you find trading cards to be a viable way to get Art into the hands of people who wouldn't ordinarily collect it?*

I found that it works for me, to be honest with you. I collect art cards simply to have these miniature portfolios of all kinds of different people's work who I wouldn't normally be able to find. I thought they were terrific as far as getting a large volume of your work into the hands of somebody at a very low cost. That was the main reason I really enjoyed doing them and the reason I enjoy buying them. I don't collect photo cards. I collect art cards. I have them all in binders and they make great little reference points and portfolios for myself.

*Do you often use those kind of things for... "Oh, you know there was this great thing Julie Bell did that I wanted to look at and try..."*

Every now and then, you get to a point, (especially if you're doing a lot of work) you kind of get stuck and maybe a color scheme will lose you and you're curious to see how certain colors will work together or you just need to jog your memory because you've hit a wall. So, you pull out a binder and just leaf through. You have three hundred to a thousand paintings at your finger tips to just leaf through hoping to get an idea as to how something will work. I find them useful that way.

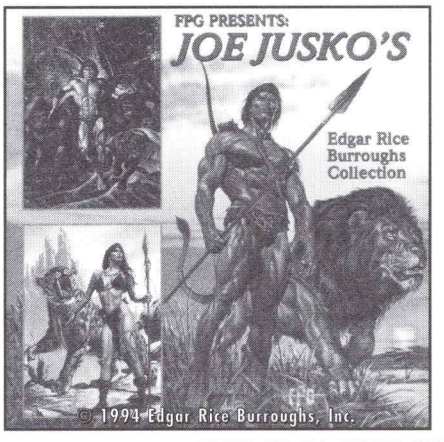
*Let's talk a little bit about the work you are doing for Harris Comics. You have, as you've mentioned, a fully painted* Vampirella *book coming out and its title is... Vampirella: Blood Lust.* It's a two issue mini-series and it's due out probably July and August.

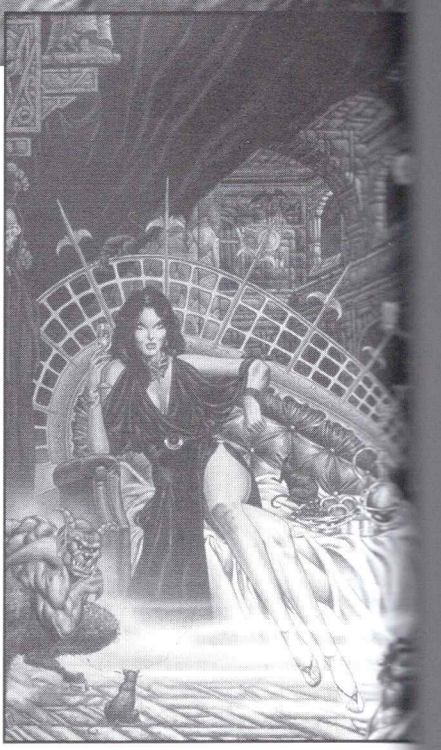
*Is there something specific with* Vampirella *that made you want to do this?*

Absolutely. She was a character that caught my attention back when I was twelve years old. I was always fascinated with the character and something esthetically about the character has always drawn me to her. I had made plans to show my portfolio to Warren *[Vampirella's* original publisher] back when I had first broken into the industry and, unfortunately, they had gone under just about the time I was going to go up there and see them. So, I never had an opportunity to work on the character. When the character was resurrected she was one of the first pieces I had done to send out to show that I had an interest. When I finally decided to do some sequential work, she was my first choice. I felt that my interest in the character would sustain me through the months of work it was going to take to paint something of that magnitude.

*The work I've seen that you've done on her is amazing.*

Thank you.



*It's just so beautiful. I recall seeing a piece at Wi... in Oakland, California that they had displayed ... frontal of her.*

Oh, yeah, the portrait shot. That's one ... favorite pieces.

*Oh man, I was walking along and I hadn't even ... that you were going to be there and I looked ... saw it and it stopped me in my tracks.*

Oh, thank you.

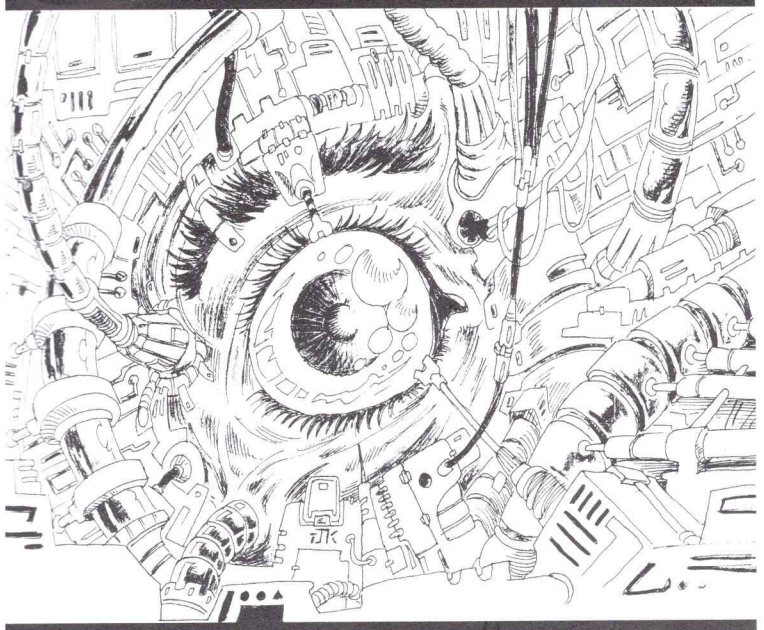
*Just beautiful.*

It was one of those pieces that was very nerve-... ing because it was something different for me. ... never done anything like that but I knew ... wanted it to look like. That fear of a blank ca... hold of me. I had the piece penciled up on th... and it sat in my studio for four months ... worked on other stuff. Finally they called me a... they needed the painting. I couldn't bring m... start it because I was very apprehensive about it. ... very seldom happens where I psyche myself ou... job and I really intimidated myself with it. W... finally got down to it, start to finish, the piece (... about four days) really worked out. I wouldn't ... a thing about it.

*Finally, now that you're doing some stuff for Harr... that's going well, what's in the future? What m... Joe Jusko want to do?*

I really don't know. If you would have asked me ... ago if I'd be doing a fully painted book, I ... have predicted this. Something else always co... One of the great things about being in the b... for a long time and having as many contacts as I ... is that you are always being offered new and di... work. People know, for the most part that I'm ... ing on this now, so they're not calling me. but a... as I put feelers out, I'm sure I'll get offers for ... stuff. I would love to be able to take a year off a... do some work for myself. I haven't done a p... painting in ten or fifteen years. I'd love to do ... wild life art. I'm planning a photo safari to A... sometime in the next couple of years, hopef... would love to just take some time and spend a ... on a painting, a nice large, detailed painting. I ... remember the last time I spent a week on a pa... much less a month. I'd love to do some wild life ... ographs and stuff like that. I guess if I could pi... one thing I would want to do, at this point, it w... be to do some serious wild life art, just take some ... and really do it.

# TR4NST3CH



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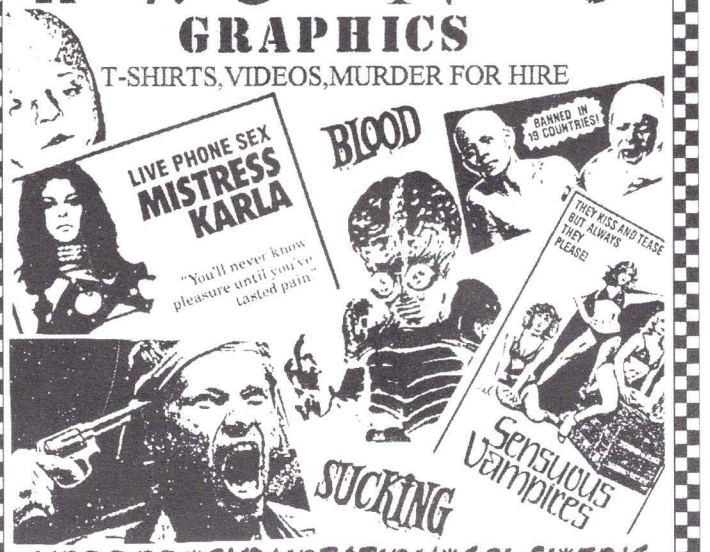


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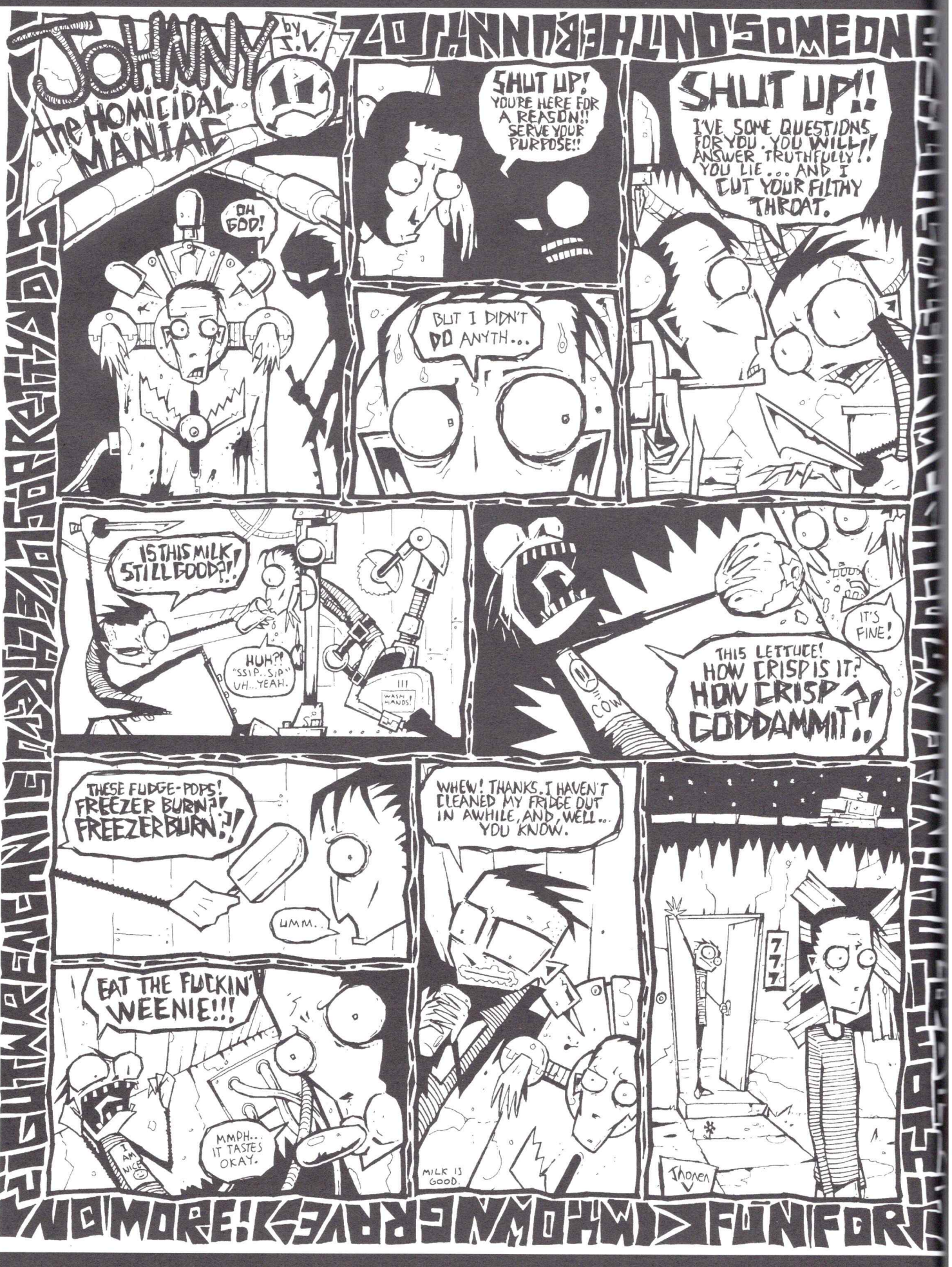

JOHNNY the HOMICIDAL MANIAC
by J.V.
OH GOD!
SHUT UP! YOU'RE HERE FOR A REASON!! SERVE YOUR PURPOSE!!
SHUT UP!! I'VE SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU. YOU WILL ANSWER TRUTHFULLY!! YOU LIE... AND I CUT YOUR FILTHY THROAT.
BUT I DIDN'T DO ANYTH...
IS THIS MILK STILL GOOD?!
HUH?! "SSIP.. SIP" UH... YEAH.
WASH HANDS!
THIS LETTUCE! HOW CRISP IS IT? HOW CRISP GODDAMMIT!!
IT'S FINE!
THESE FUDGE-POPS! FREEZER BURN?! FREEZERBURN?!
UMM.
EAT THE FUCKIN' WEENIE!!!
I AM NICE
MMPH... IT TASTES OKAY.
WHEW! THANKS. I HAVEN'T CLEANED MY FRIDGE OUT IN AWHILE, AND, WELL.. YOU KNOW.
MILK IS GOOD.
777
JHONEN
SOMEONE'S ON THE BUNNY ROAD
STORE WITH NO EXIT
NO MORE! GROWN FUN FOR!

# Diamanda GALÁS

"Oh Lord God of My Salvation, I Cry Day and Night Before Thee: Let My Prayer Come Before Thee: Incline Thine Ear Unto My Cry."

Her name has become synonymous with controversy. Her recordings challenge the listener to see beyond his/her limited perceptions of what music is capable. She is outspoken, dedicated and ferociously loyal to her cause. She is Diamanda Galás and she will grab your attention and, by sheer force of will, make you listen. From the initial strains of her Plague Mass through the exploration of AIDS dementia and clinical depression called *Vena Cava* and on to her latest release, the amazing *Shrei X*, she has forged a career of intelligence and raw emotion in the arena that is the music business. I must admit, I was more than a little wary of sitting down to talk with her. I had heard how she harbored no inclination to suffer fools and I feared a talk wherein I would feel the need to walk on eggshells. Much to my surprise, the woman I met was an absolute delight, fascinating and intelligent, witty and alarmingly beautiful. She is a living contradiction to the image the oftentimes myopic press has crafted for her. Diamanda Galás is, and will remain, a stunningly committed artist and one who truly is an original.

*What were you like as a child?*

Oh God, I'll tell you. Extremely introverted–which hasn't changed at all, really, not at all. Very, very introverted and very, I suppose you could say "bookish." I would sit at the piano and play for long, long hours, improvise and play Chopin and Beethoven and just not really talk to anyone for quite a long time. I was not a popular child. [laughs] I was a very unpopular child. Most of the interesting people I've met were unpopular as children... So, that's good. I think it must be. Clearly, I'm more extroverted than I was then, but that's only because, by the nature of this profession, you end up having to be a little bit more.

*What do you consider a bigger influence on you and your work: your life at home with the family and siblings or your time after that on the streets and going to college?*

I would say that life at home, really, because I spent so much time at home that everything afterwards became, to some degree, a reflection of it. So, even if the other things are a reaction against, it's still a mirror image of a certain kind of upbringing. In my case, it was a very, very sheltered, Greek Orthodox, "don't trust the Americans" type of upbringing. Yes, to reiterate–I would say that everything amounts, in a sense, to looking at the beginning as the primary image. I do not mean to cast a pejorative light on that upbringing, as it taught me how to be alone for long periods of time in complete concentration.

*Out of curiosity...your parents... What do they think of your work?*

My father very much likes the piano work. He loves the piano work. My mother likes the more operatic work. They are very happy that I am able to survive doing this. That's my father's primary concern, that I should be able to survive doing this work, and, clearly, I am able to, so that's fine by him.

*While researching this interview, I learned that you once toured performing at mental institutions. I was immediately curious as to the patients' reactions to your art. Was it just the performance of songs or was it the type of art that you are doing now?*

I would say that *Shrei X* is related to that early work. I was performing standing with my back to the audience, dressed in a long black dress. It was 1975-76. I was just doing improvisational vocal things. I didn't really know what I was doing. I would stand for ten minutes silent and then make these sounds. The reaction to it was that most of the men were kind of flipped out about it, but the women were very interested. Some of the men were interested... The people who were interested wanted to do it, too, you know what I mean? They wanted to do it because clearly, it was an inappropriate activity to do this kind of thing and they were not in a position to do anything creative they could do on their own, except maybe basket weaving. You know when you go into a mental hospital, they give... They give you these little tasks. "Listen, we're going to make some clay jars."

*"It's pot-holder day!" [laughs]*

Well, there it is. I remember when I was in one of those places, they said, "Today, we are going to do finger-painting" and I said, "Look, you know what? I'm not doing this shit, man because I might start to get used to this and I don't want to get used to it." [laughs] I think they were kind of unhappy about that. As concerns the performances several years before, however, I did not think it would be responsible to undertake this as therapeutic work, since I had no training whatsoever in that area.

*You've been called in the press "emotionally too strong for the wimp classical establishment." Do you feel that is an accurate assessment of your career?*

Oh, yeah, I think so. I mean, one has always to look at individuals, though, in these kinds of assessments, because there are individuals in every group, classical or, what is called avant garde, rock and roll, contemporary music, free jazz, whatever, who have iconoclastic visions and then there are people who don't and there are people who are very, very timid, I find–especially in what is considered alternative music. Some of those people who I would not expect to be so timid–went to *Vena Cava* and they were truly shocked. They couldn't listen to that music. They could listen to the voice and piano music or the band stuff, but they could not listen to *Vena Cava* and they had all sorts of theoretical, aesthetic, or moralistic reasons to find it horrifying or distasteful.

*I recently read an article about you by Joy Ray of some Los Angeles-based fish wrap and she referred to you as a "deranged diva" and described your voice as a cross "halfway between Ethel Merman and a tortured farm animal."*

Oh! I read that! I loved that so much. It's the *Downtown News* wasn't it?

*I think it is.*

I laughed so fucking hard. I died laughing.

*She later says of your performance, "It made one wish that some kind of grandmother would nag, "You have such a lovely voice, Diamanda, why do you shriek like that?"*

[laughs] Adorable!

*On the other hand, I wonder if that kind of blatant stupidity ever infuriates you?*

I think it's because I've heard it for so long that either something is written in such a way that it just makes me completely laugh, or it's written in a very banal way and then it just bores me. Very few times are you going to find people who are going to "get it," you know? In the mean time, I hope they can, at least, be entertaining, and someone saying a "cross between Ethel Merman and a tortured farm animal," makes me laugh. I mean, years ago when I heard that stuff, when I heard "operatic-voodoo, zombie music" and all that shit and "play it only when the neighbors annoy..." that was *Downbeat Magazine*, who should, theoretically, know better,

Photo courtesy of Mute Records

and that was 1978. Curiously enough, *Downbeat Magazine*, which is a jazz magazine, who will extol my ass when I'm dead, still does not understand where I have taken the voice; they just think I'm a pervert. This, in my estimation, is totally mad. And, I don't care, because it's not like they sell lots of records for anyone... Still, it's a very strange thing. So, then I figure of this broad, I don't know who she is, she writes something like that, I get a

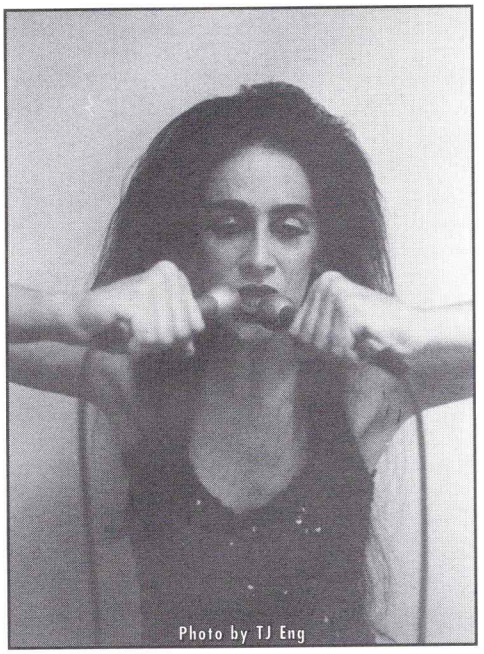


Photo by TJ Eng

"kick out of it"–ha ha–I have to make sure that, in this business, I look at things and I'm able to get an entertainment level out of them, because there are so many ignorant things written. It's just endless.

*Some of the other articles I read about you strove to denigrate you and match your intensity when they clearly didn't have the balls to do so. They would go on in this purplish prose describing you and your performance and trying to illicit an emotional response in the reader. I just thought that was so hypocritical.*

They were doing it to denigrate me?

*Yeah, it was like "She was up there shrieking and carrying on..." It was definitely designed to conjure specific emotions in the reader.*

Obviously it did. You know, I have to tell you, I had to do a reading recently–which is not my sort of thing. I've never done anything like that, but they asked me at The New School to read from *The Shit of God* and so what I decided the most important thing would be to do, for my own entertainment and for theirs, was to read a bunch of things that I had found on-line–different descriptions of my work from people who disliked it intensely. It was so much fun, the shit that they wrote. One guy actually liked it but he was so funny because he was talking about a SWAT team coming–why he can't listen to the music because of the fucking police and a SWAT team would come into his house–and then what would happen to him...? The shit was so funny that everyone was screaming with laughter and I said, "Look, when you go and do this kind of music, you have to able to read this shit and laugh because if you can't, you may not want to do it very long. Because you're constantly going to be getting this shit and not in a polite way, like in a magazine. I mean during the show. In Prague, we had this performance of *Shrei X* where this guy kept standing up during the quiet bits and saying, "You fucking bitch. You fucking shut up. You fucking shut up. You fucking shut up" in what his language was. We had it on tape because we had taped the performance and so, I thought, "God, how beautiful if we keep it on the tape of the live performance." It ended up that we had a better take of that section of the piece somewhere else–which was really unfortunate. All I can do is look at that in a scientific way and say, "That's his response." There's nothing I can do to change it and it's not my responsibility really because I'm not playing Vegas.

*That would be good...*

Well, I think so, too.

*I'd love to see that.*

I would love to do Vegas, but I would only consider it if I were doing the most, most experimental work I do. There would be no point otherwise, really. [laughs]

*How hard on your voice are the number of shows you do on a tour?*

They're not hard on my voice. Things that are harder on my voice are actually talking. The hardest thing on the voice is talking on the phone. When I speak on the phone, I speak, unfortunately, very aggressively and I speak very loudly because I think of the phone as a microphone or something, but then, at the same time, I'm trying to make an intimate sound so that I'm not yelling at you. So, I end up fucking myself because I'm not actually projecting the voice in the way that you're supposed to for singing or for speaking. Every singer, including Luciano Pavarotti, will tell you that the phone is the most dangerous thing for a singer. If I don't do more than just four shows a week, I'm all right.

*You are quoted as saying, "I've never been interested in willful provocateurism." However, some would say that your work is exactly that. How do you answer those people?*

They may be right. There may be some things that are willfully provocative. But I suspect those things are more a response to things that are meant to insult me. In that sense, I've learned to lose that energy by the way I answer something that's far off in left field–by deflecting the energy. So, I don't know–I really can't know about that. The one thing I do know is that on a musical level unless I heard something I wouldn't be able to do it. Not by doing some kind of advanced audience survey and writing something I thought was calculated to shock them. I just wouldn't be able to work that way. It would be dull...and not my ace in the hole, in any case; it would be like playing the stock market or something.

*How do you answer those who say that your voice is an "acquired taste"?*

[laughs] I would have to agree with that. I can't understand why I shouldn't agree with that.

*I've done some work in hospices and grief counseling and I have a degree in Mortuary Science...*

I should have known. Anyone who would interview me would have a fucking degree in Mortuary Science.

*I fully agree with your sentiments regarding the alienation of those afflicted with HIV. Do you think that we, as a society, will ever have a rational outlook when it comes to death and dying and the plight of the afflicted?*

I don't know because it seems to be so insidious. You can see someone who says all of the right shit and is even out there demonstrating or signing bills or giving money to the right organizations and blah blah blah, but then, in this person's one-to-one, private life–in terms, for example, of how they deal with people who are sick, he or she is just completely out of the picture and won't see people in hospitals–won't be around sick people. They want to disconnect because they think of these people as already dead. I've seen so many contradictions in behavior that I am almost of the belief that, unless a person experiences a thing like this first hand, it may be impossible for that person to have even an approach pattern to understanding the pain of another individual. I hate saying that because I didn't think it before, but cynical observation triumphed.

*What is your take on the "trendiness" of AIDS sympathy where you see actors displaying red ribbons at awards shows?*

My best friend, who unfortunately died just a half year ago, and I used to say that we really thought that anyone with a red ribbon should volunteer for an injection of HIV so that they could really, really wear it with a more cognitive sentiment. When I see that crap, like on awards shows, it just makes me fucking ill.

*You see people with this pasted on sympathy because it's the politically correct thing to do.*

Actually, I have Hepatitis C and am doing a lot of the homework many friends with HIV have to do... many of the alternative therapies are similar and many persons in both groups have quite a lot of experience with alpha interferon. I'm in line for a clinical trial using a stronger dose once a week. I

Photo by DonnAnn McAdams

got a lab tech to give me some of my blood for my refrigerator and I just laugh about it because I think, "Wow! The guys never wanted to give me my blood in the laboratories because they said, 'This blood is really lethal, toxic waste.' But I think, "Well, God, if someone really wants to get to know my disease, here it is."

*It's funny, you'll see someone at an awards show, wearing a red ribbon, yet the body of this actor' work, (specifically Sylvester Stallone) is wholly homophobic.*

Exactly right. Or the music things... They've got this fucking red ribbon on and they give some corny-assed speech, some fucking thing they can do for five minutes and then go home and get blown by a bunch of showgirls. And then, their music, their "art," never had anything to with the epidemic, except to, maybe, when they feel like they lost a lyric in a song, say "Faggot!" I can't deal with that shit because I think it's ludicrous. I mean, artists who do any kind of work that is serious–like the work of David Wojnarowicz, Thomas Avena, Jerome Caja, or Coil–dealing with the AIDS epidemic–have made an enormous investment of time getting to know their subject **real** well.

*Since a lot of your work deals with AIDS, I wonder generally what the Gay Community thinks of your*

*work and specifically what those who suffer from AIDS think?*

A lot of people coming to my concerts come from that community. There is a lot of warmth. I don't know how to explain it, but these are the people, in general, I am surrounded by who have asked me to continue doing the work. Many AIDS groups/organizations are very supportive of my stuff. A lot of people are. But in answer to "Is the 'Gay Community' supportive of your work," I could never say that some furniture queen who is only listening to Sheena Easton would give a fuck about my work just because it deals with the epidemic. My homosexual audience is a bit more "radical," shall we say.

*With the intensity of your work and the adverse reactions of such people as the Catholic Church to it, do you ever have periods where you have doubts about the direction your work takes you?*

Never.

*Good for you!*

Contradiction: once, in 1990, I did.

*For a minute.*

For a few minutes after I got the protest in Italy. On one level I thought it was interesting, but on an emotional level, I found it very sad because Italy was one of the places where I most enjoyed singing. I'm performing there now, but there was a period where I couldn't go back there and I was unhappy about this because I felt that I was being cut off, in a sense, from my own people. I didn't like it. I was very unhappy about being castigated over a moral disagreement. And I've said before that I do not think many Italian women would have found Plague Mass morally disagreeable. I think it was a bunch of guys in the Christian Democrat Party who had nothing else to do. So, I did wonder then.

And yes–now that you've asked me–there have been a couple times, when in performance, if someone was very sick and I was doing, let's say, "There Are No More Tickets To The Funeral" or a kind of work that was very aggressive, I would worry about that person's presence in the audience because I wished that my music were more therapeutic; but I recognize, as a composer, that is not really its primary function. It may function that way for some people, but it can't be its primary function, otherwise I should really spend time working as a therapist.

*That's got to be tough...*

It is tough because I saw a gentleman with his mother–and he looked so frail–and I was doing "How Shall Our Judgment be Declared Upon the Wicked" and I looked at him and I said, "Why am I doing this? How can I do this?" Then, in another moment, I understood it perfectly, because many times that very person would come up and say, "I'm so glad you performed, 'How Shall Our Judgment be Declared Upon the Wicked.'" Physical frailty is often accompanied by extreme violence of thought. And an answering voice of similar resonance can be most welcome, in the wake of Hallmark prosaicism.

*I've always thought that in the moments after one of your performances when people come up to you, there must be some really amazing dialogues.*

There are. There are some very beautiful ones. As you can imagine, there are some people that call from hospitals who are coming out for an evening to see the performance and then go back. You have to be equal to that. It takes a lot because their act is so very significant to both of us.

*Does the weight of that ever wear on you?*

Well, I want to be equal to the fact that they've come to see the performance and they've come backstage and, so, I don't think the word is "wearing," but I do think that it means that you want to be at your maximum concentration with each individual you're speaking to. I try to only speak to people I think that really want to speak on a serious level because, otherwise, time for serious people is wasted, and flippancy will make me want to slap the speaker. So, in a sense, it's more intense than maybe people coming backstage after a Barry Manilow concert. [laughs] Presumably.

*I know that the death of your brother had a profound influence not only on you and your work and it set a definite course. Now, I don't know what your feelings on the afterlife are, but if there is one, do you think he is there proud of you and what you've accomplished?*

Well, I wish I could feel that way. I unfortunately can't feel that way. Anytime I look at a picture of him, I feel an overwhelming sense of shame, of horror. I can only think about anger–about him being only angry and in my dreams of him–he is enraged. There's no peace at all. Sometimes I'll say about my friend Carl or about my brother, "Well, one day we'll see each other," but I recognize that that's the human wish, the human hope. I mean who can know...but I don't really think so.

*Another thing I learned about you is that you have a background in Neurochemistry and Hematology/Immunology.*

But I wouldn't say that it's of a Master's degree background, it's just from undergraduate school.

*How much of that background finds its way into your writing?*

I think a lot of it does, because of spending years studying psychology, neurochemistry–studying different ways of thinking about things, of understanding various paradigms allows you to think about the relationship of sound, ideas and the brain in a very different way than perhaps coming out of a music program. First of all, the kind of experiments I did improvising with my voice, taking lots of acid and just locking myself up and all of this, was really more or less opting to do research on myself instead of the rats–which I felt was less cowardly. [laughs] Ultimately I felt it would end up with me having a lot more information about substances and the Inside World. [laughs]. I can't do all the substances I'd like to these days with Hepatitis C. Too, too bad.

*I can imagine...*

I mean it on a experimental level, really, not so much in a hedonistic one. Now, I have to be really careful with what I do.

*Hepatitis was always such a big problem for us working in mortuaries. I entered college expecting for them to really be concerned with HIV, however what happened was that it wasn't an issue. The things to worry about were Hepatitis or Tuberculosis and that really surprised me. They were concerned with Hepatitis because of the contact with bodily fluids. According to sources, HIV wasn't a problem eighteen hours after death...*

But Hepatitis still is...

*Right, and Tuberculosis because it creates a capsule that you can still contract it due to manipulating the body and thereby compressing the lungs.*

People don't know much about Hepatitis C at all. Now that they are finding out about it, it's pretty alarming to a lot of people. I may be taking a course of interferon for 12 months or more, which doesn't make me very happy, I can tell you that, but if it becomes necessary after years of working strictly with alternative therapies, then I shall have to do both. Build my immune house and kill the rats inside without burning down the walls.

*Since so much of your work is based in desperation and sadness, how do you process all of that and remain the delightful lady that you are?*

[laughs] Well, I'll tell you what. If I weren't able to put these emotional things out in that context, if I had to create a concept for them, I think I would not always be a very pleasant person. I think I would be too depressed to even talk about anything. I've done some stages like that when you can't even talk or pick up the phone. You can't do anything, can't create anything, and that state, which is so close to being a catatonic, is a completely worthless place to be. It's so painful it's something I try to avoid. I know the signs of it and I try to make sure that doesn't happen. Creating things gives me a feeling of something outside my life which is more important, which is what I can do. We do one record and then do this other project and then I have that to live for and it's an exorcism of precisely the things you're talking about. It's not a disconnection from my life.

*Do you believe that you will always create your art on the periphery or will you someday find something that resembles commercial acceptance?*

This is funny, because when I create, for me, it's always quite smack dab in the center of the world. [laughs] It's only later that I discover that it's considered marginal. We had a concert in London and there was maybe eighteen hundred people there, maybe two thousand, and practically all of the people who came there were from "the fringe,"

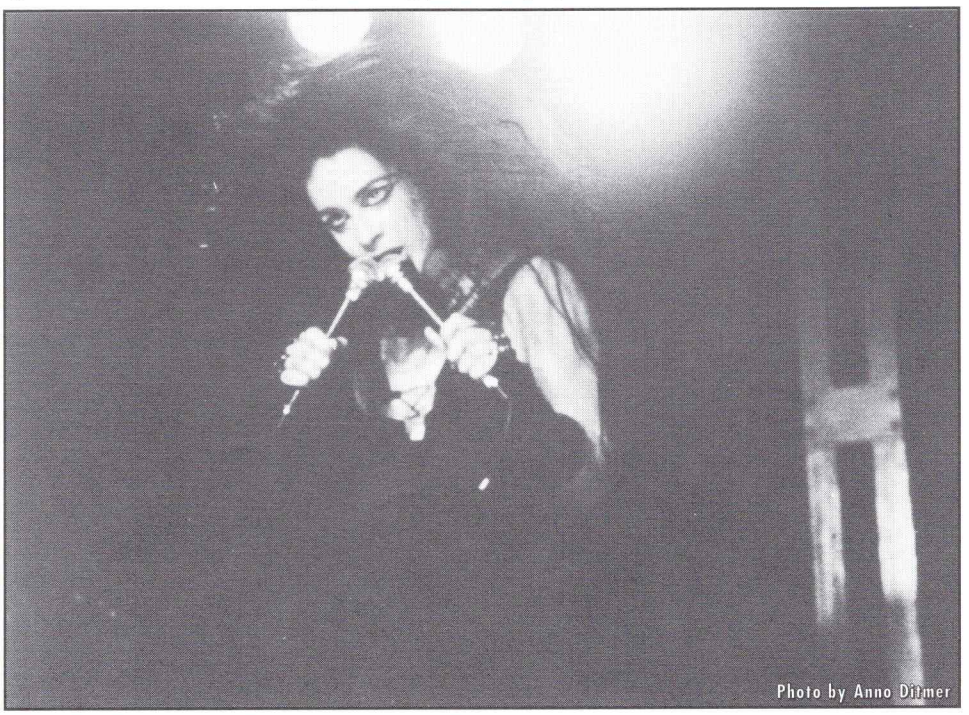


Photo by Anno Dittmer

but from so many different fringes that you had all these fucking witches there, from all these fringes. And it was like, "Yes! This is nice. This is where it is with me. There's a whole bunch of people who know what I'm talking about and want to hear it." You may not be able to advertise to them in Rape Magazine, I mean, *Spin Magazine,* or in the most mainstream art magazine or in the mainstream anything ,but they may be reading your magazine. They may be reading magazines that are not mainstream things. Actually, a lot of people who read about me now, read about me on-line which is a far more democratic enterprise.

*For now...*

For now...Well, yes, exactly. For now.

*I recently saw a photo of you on the cover of* Mondo 2000 *#8 and, I have to tell you, I was totally floored by how beautiful you are.*

[laughs] I don't always look like that, let me tell you. It was a good day.

*I had seen some other photos of you in performance in the midst of doing your work.*

It's not very beautiful.

*Well, it is, in its own way, but your face was contorted and you were in the middle of doing what you do and I saw that photo and I thought, "My God..." Some of the photos in* The Shit of God *and also the press photo Mute is sending out...you're astounding.*

Oh, that's so kind of you.

*I'm just wondering if a lot of people react that same way? I mean, are they struck by the polarity of that?*

Probably. The thing is, I don't actually feel like those press photos most of the time. I mean, there are occasional moments, but I think I'm closer to those performance photos. [laughs] I always used to say, "You're trying to get a Brooke Shields photo out of me, but you're trying to make Shelley Winters look like Brooke Shields."

*Oh stop...*

I tell you, I have a very good sense of humor about this. I always refer to her as "she." All of the photos are "she." It's done in the most healthy sense, I think. Really. Because in order for her to have a career, I have do all of the fucking work. [laughs]

*The Annie Leibowitz photo I thought was just brilliant.*

Oh, that's a beautiful photograph. She did a magnificent job with that.

*Ok...that's enough of me kissing your ass.*

[laughs] That's very funny.

*You have been quoted as saying that, "[Weak men] should be dragged out into the middle of the street, beaten, humiliated, degraded and sodomized by my friends and me for sport. I love seeing weak men cry."*

Oh, absolutely. Oh, god yes.

*What is it about these men that elicits such a hard core reaction from you?*

My experience with them, because I've always found that they are the meanest, most mean-spirited people in the world. Their weakness makes them incapable of human kindness and makes them stingy, mean-spirited little rodents who, certainly, have no other use than to be plundered for sport. I really have gotten into a lot of trouble by loudly discussing names and places in public places. I just don't have a very high tolerance for a lot of jumped-up napoleonic urges in short pants.

*Tell me a little bit about you working as a prostitute.*

Photo by Petra Gall

*What lead you to that and do you feel you gained anything once you left?*

I was living with drag queens at the time and I learned a lot from them about what the position and the power of a woman is–and I'd never thought of it before. I never even used the word. I thought of the word as a sort of sacrilege. I still have an odd feeling about using the word "woman." It seems so personal somehow. It annoyed me, but they perceived things in a very different way and they said, "You don't actually understand your position in society" and I'd listen to them and it was very, very interesting. So, my behavior, in that sense, was much more predatory than anything, working with them. Do you know San Pablo Avenue in Oakland? That's where it was. This was in the seventies. One of them said, "I'll bet you wouldn't go outside at six o'clock in the morning in the rain" and I said, "Oh yeah? You give me the right wig, and I'm on my way."

*Somehow I would never want to dare you to do anything.*

It's my own stupidity that won't allow me to turn down a dare. It's just ridiculously sick. It's one of those things I have to be accountable for, I suppose.

*Is it true that you are legally blind?*

Yeah, well, I have 20/2000 vision so that's considered quite legally blind, but I do wear very thick glasses. Usually they're dark because I have a light sensitivity also, so they look like Mr. Ray Charles' glasses, but they're definitely a very heavy prescription.

*Does that have a profound impact on your work? Was it one of the reasons* Shrei X *was performed in the darkness?*

I don't know. I think that *Shrei X* really was done in the darkness simply because it gives me the kind of isolation that I want and need in order to do a piece that is so intimate, in a sense. Also because of the nature of the work in quadraphonic space and it being a work about sensory deprivation, that makes me want to deny the audience any visual escape from the sound. I want them to have to deal with the sound. That's why the man was angry in Prague because he was horrified that he had to sit there for thirty-five minutes and "Where was the entertainment and it was so dark and it's thirty-five minutes later and she's saying all of this shit and I have to sit here and I don't see anything. Oh shit!" So, that was a kind of research for me, that's what it really was about; but there may be some correlations there.

*I was reading a list of people who have asked to collaborate with you. Most were pretty predictable: Trent Reznor and David Harrington of the Kronos Quartet, however, the name Stephen Sondheim surprised me.*

[laughs] Oh, where did you read that? Oh, I love that you know that. This is very refreshing for me, really. People come and say, "Well, we're doing this interview. Could you tell me about your music? I haven't heard it yet." That's very rare, but it's very demoralizing. [laughs]

*What can you tell me about the project he had in mind?*

Well, James LaPine's come to a few of my shows.

*Oh, great!*

I love his film work.

*I saw* Sunday in the Park *with George at the Golden Gate Theater in San Francisco. We cried for days after seeing that. It's so funny to have always thought certain things to yourself about art and then to hear someone totally unrelated to you present the exact same thoughts on a stage.*

That's wonderful. I just saw a film of his and I thought it was wonderful. I heard that they wanted me to audition for something. It was a while ago and I couldn't because I was on the road. I was very surprised by it because it's a tradition that I don't know any thing about, really. I hear great things about these people.

*When he did* Into the Woods, *which is based on* Grimm's Fairy Tales, *it had this great sense about it. There are very dark moments to it, but also very funny.*

Well, I hope that, sometime, we are able to have tea and discuss a possible collaboration.

*I would kill to be a fly on the wall for that.*

I think you should set the whole thing up. [laughs]

*I'll do that.*

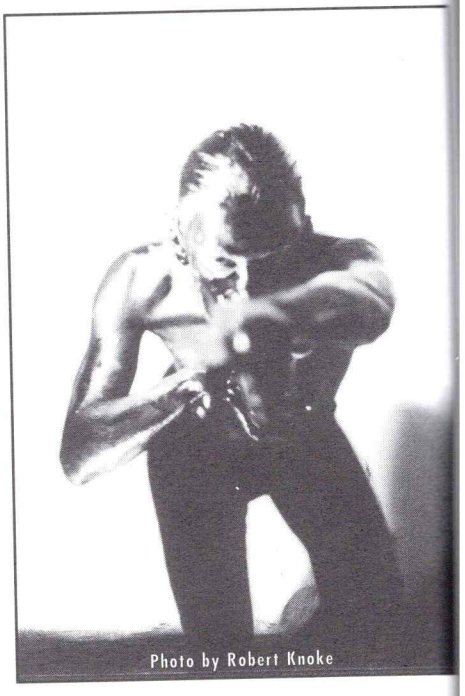


Photo by Robert Knoke

I like that.

*Because of the intensity of your work, what do you do for fun? When the work is done and it's time to let your hair down...*

You can certainly ask [my good friend] Michael Flanagan, with whom I have shared the most larcenous and vile mail–awful, awful [things]. I love this e-mail thing, because we can really write the most cold-blooded things to each other without talking. Especially around concert time. We have a very, very good time with it. So, I would say that my Oscar Wildean enterprise with Michael Flanagan is one of my most enjoyable things. Other than that, I just discovered Orson Welles... I had never seen his work before. I am so knocked out by it, I couldn't believe it. I watch certain films and do a lot of reading. I don't like going outside. I don't like going to concerts. I never go to concerts. I don't like going to public places so much unless I'm being paid for it. I don't really like it. I like indoors, so whatever I can do indoors is really quite fine with me.

*I am assuming that you rent these films, what section do you go to? The comedy section or the drama?*

[laughs] The comedy section...[laughs] No, I like to go to the medical science fiction section, but I'm running out–I'm already down to the transplants. Too bad. The thrillers, of course, the thrillers I like. I've been watching a lot of films recently because of this Hep C scare thing, so I'm going through my Norman Cousins phase of seeing these films I enjoy. I've seen a lot of films like *Wasp Woman, Ape Woman (Aquanetta)* and all these films where these women turn into scorpions and so forth, I really love those. Diseased Pariahs like monster films,(referring fondly to *Disease Pariah News.*) All of those early films where they're turning men into wolves, dogs, or robots, this kind of thing as well as horror films; even old ones like *Strangler in the Swamp, Victor Buono's Strangler, the Boston Strangler*–oh, hell: all the stranglers.

*Good for you! I'm a big horror film fan.*

You can hardly help it. There are such wonderful ones. To me, horror films are, in a sense, also like medical science fiction. I really don't like *Star Wars* and all of that sort of thing, though. I t makes me sleepy. I think I don't understand space because it's too far away from my living room… I really don't have the conceptual ability to comprehend it. Or the short-term memory.

*Speaking of films, you've worked on several.*

In a very small time way, I must tell you, not really big time, just sound effects and a few songs here and there.

*Is film something you would ever want to get involved in as far as performing or writing?*

Yes. This reminds me of seeing the beginning of *Macbeth* with Orson Welles the other day. Ah! What a monster this guy...such a fucking monster. What a huge sex symbol, too. What a fucking genius. I just could just see him fucking Rita Hayworth. I could see the whole thing. Such a gorgeous man. Yes, definitely, because it's, after all, operatic. The whole thing. The sound and the image. Everything is so much a part of each other. I really think of composers as being eminently qualified to do film. Anyone who has seen anything with Bernard Hermann's music knows that's 60% of the film. Yes. And in terms of a certain intimacy of presentation, as a performer, I think it would be an interesting working experience. Actually, on a really different level, I was even thinking of calling Wes Craven and talking to him about this. I've done some sound work with him. I've got to see *Scream.* I've heard it's great.

*It's wonderful.*

Oh, you saw it?

*Yeah. It takes all of the rules of horror film and makes fun of them while adhering to them. Every scene has some "in" joke in it that you'll get if you're a horror fan.*

Fantastic. Who should know better than that innovator? (*Last House of the Left, The Hills Have Eyes, Serpent and the Rainbow* and of course the **first** *Nightmare on Elm Street*) I've felt like calling him and saying, "Why don't I play a really hardcore fucking woman killer? Let's not make her sexy, don't make it with short dresses and blonde hair and all of that. Let's make her scary. Let's make her real. So, I'd like to do that.

*I think that would be great!*

I think it would be completely great. I think I'm going to write him.

*Tell me what prompted you to release your new book,* The Shit of God.

I was asked to do it by Ira Silverberg of High Risk/Serpent's Tail (who has gone on to work as chief editor for Grove Press) For many years he's asked me because he's been to performances like INSEKTA and Plague Mass and he's felt that the text or "libretto," though naturally subsidiary in its musical presentation, was something that the signal processing made unclear. He felt it was important for people to know the words of these pieces. I had never thought of isolating the text from the overall musical work/performance, but there is a lot of sense to this since the verbal content has been important to many people who are interested by the work. Clearly it is a book of "librettos," not poems, but there is a tradition for these isolated publications in opera and theater a tradition which serves a more complete understanding of the work overall.

*I think it's a beautiful book.*

Thank you.

*Now that* Shrei X *is out, what's next for you in your plan for world domination?*

What I want to do is release an album of the world tour. Blaise Dupuy and I got together and we selected several pieces that we felt were the best pieces form the tour, the best performances. We are also working on a new performance piece which we are recording at Sorcerer Studios in Manhattan; it is a large theatrical work which had many beginnings in the piece INSEKTA, but is now advanced beyond that, and a larger work.

*Are there tours in the future?*

At the moment, we are planning a Mediterranean tour which includes Venice, Sicily, Thessaloniki, and Malaga, and other cities for the Spring.

*Finally, is it true that you appeared on the* Phil Donahue Show?

[laughs] No!

*Someone told me that...*

You know what, I think someone told me that once as well and said, "Ah, I just saw you on the *Phil Donahue Show*. You just looked so beautiful." And I said, "What did I do?" She said, "I don't know!" I don't know who it was. There are a couple of broads out there that kind of look like me. I did get this offer to perform on the *Merv Griffin Show* years ago by the manager of Yma Sumac, but I just had to refuse.

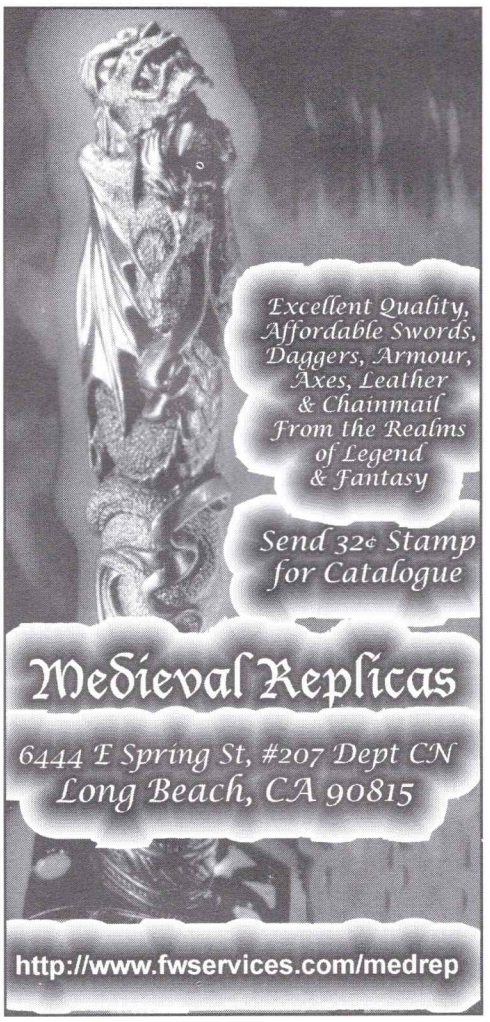
*I would just want to see you on the couch...*

Well, he's probably all right, Ol' Merv.

*You and Steve and Edie...*

Me and Steve and Edie, right. I think perhaps if I decide to do the *Ethel Merman Story*, I'll consider it.

by Carnell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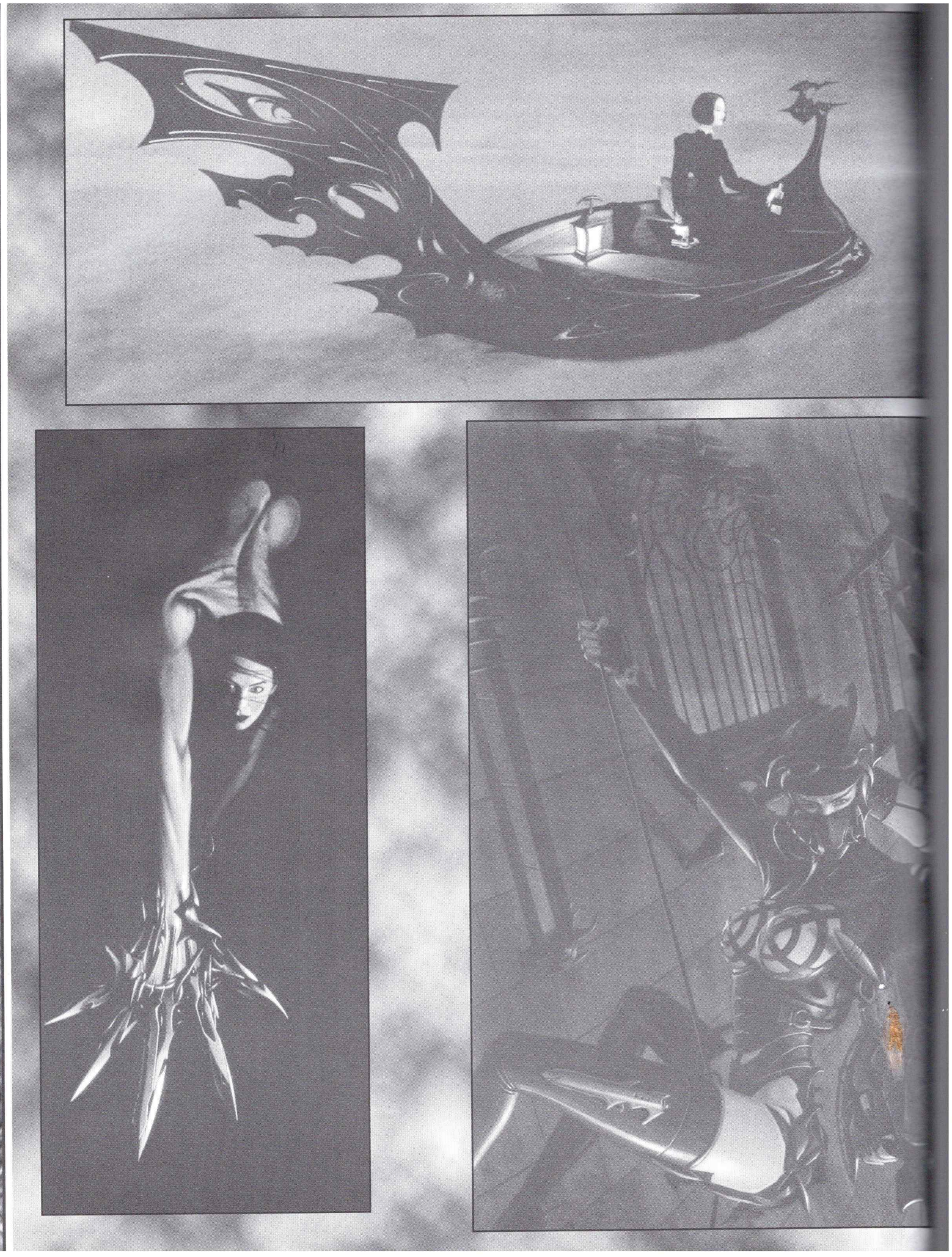
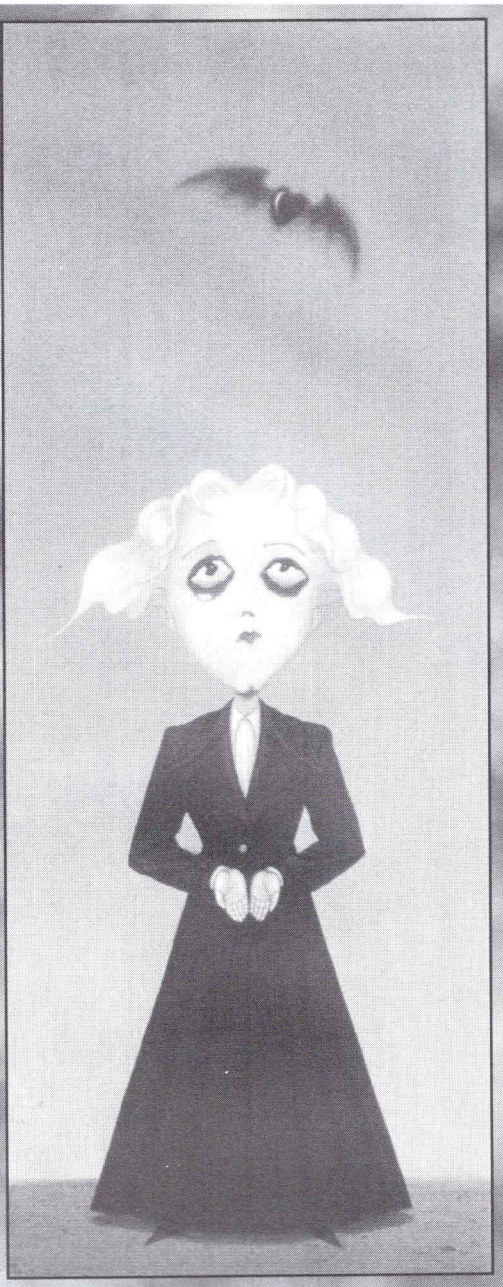
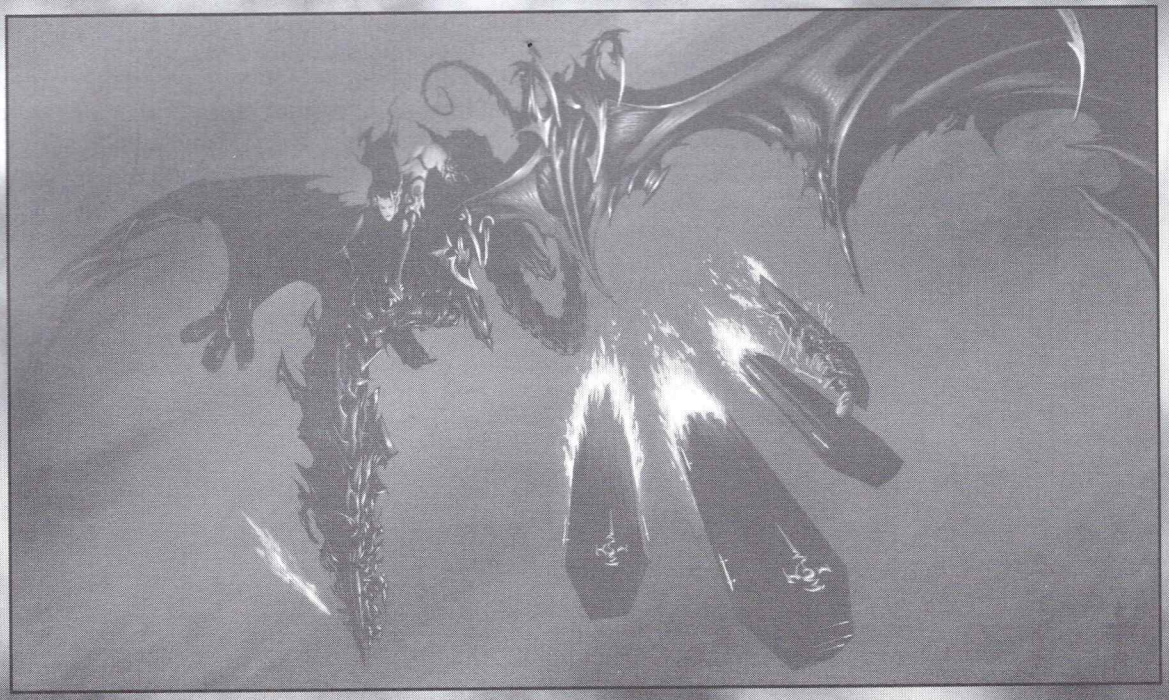


# Peter Kim

For more information contact Peter Kim at (310)838.1958

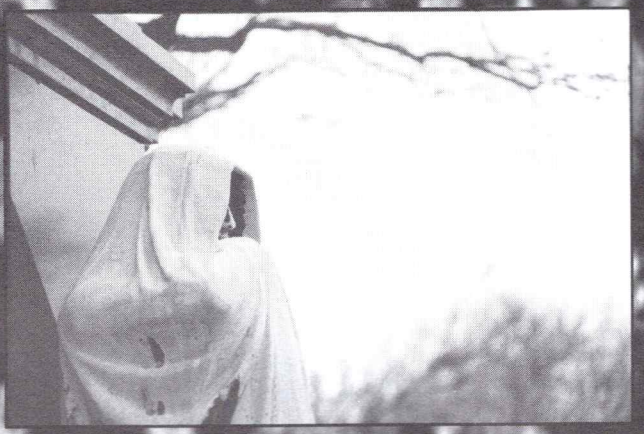




# E Katie Holm

Fall Maiden

Margo



Heather Spear

You may know E. Katie Holm by her work with Projekt Records. She has been called upon to capture some of their recording artists on film. Here is a sampling of Katie's talent outside of that realm. For info regarding the artist contact

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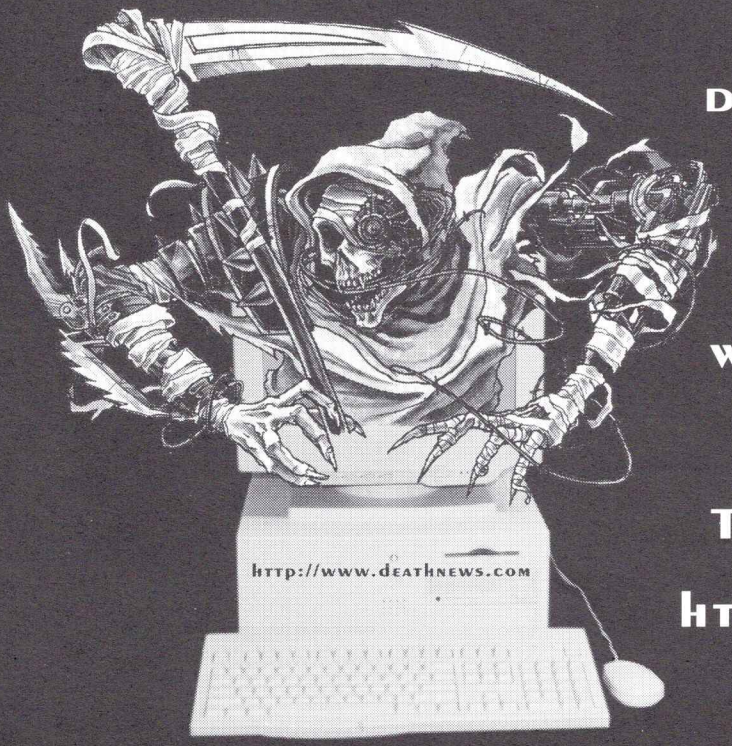


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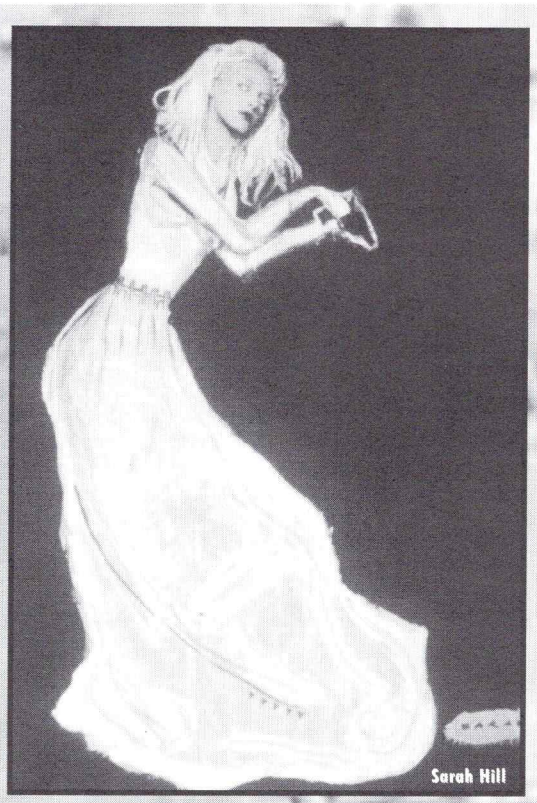


# Le Conservatoire

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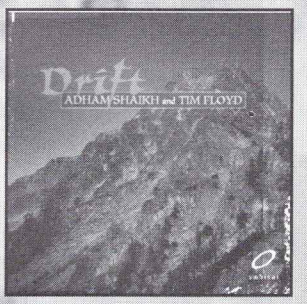
**Listening Room:**

Adham Shaikh and Tim Floyd
*Drift*
First, let me say that Adham Shaikh's disc, *Journey to the Sun*, was one of the CDs that sat on my Top Ten list of last year. His thoroughly ambient styled music was so good that, even on the initial listening, it became a favorite of mine. Now, Instinct Records has brought Shaikh and Tim Floyd together to create an album that 'sonically maps a sinewave of existence.' A lofty goal, but one at which the artists succeed, in spades. Instinct has, for years, been putting out exceptional music and *Drift* is but the latest in that laudable roster. The music here is ethnically influenced, while keeping its feet firmly planted in accessibility, that is to say, they never wander into the dangerous netherworld of "noodling." *Drift* is a finely crafted adventure into the musical palette called Life with all of its beauty and mysteries held firmly intact. Admittedly I was already a big fan of Mr. Shaikh's work before listening to this disc, but now that I've had the opportunity to take his and Mr. Floyd's journey, I am even more so.
Instinct Records, 26 West 17th St. #502, New York NY 10011
- Solipsist

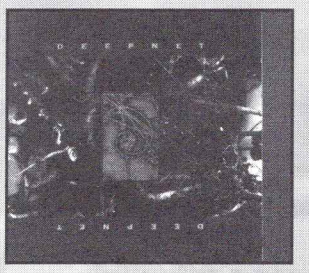
Wreckage/Like Wreckage
*The Good, The Bad, The Ugly, and the Dead*
*(Rare and Unreleased Recordings 1988-1993)*
This collection of previously unreleased tracks and live recordings is a retrospective for the band Wreckage, and its precursor, Like Wreckage. The first seven tracks are by the original version of the band, Like Wreckage, while the remaining twelve are from Wreckage.
The tracks by Like Wreckage have a strong early goth-punk feel, reminiscent at times of other prominent goth-punk bands such as Bauhaus, the Damned and Christian Death, as well as particularly reminding me of one of my old favorite post-punk bands, T.S.O.L. The remaining tracks still retain that goth-punk feel, but vary more in style, sometimes taking on an industrial feel, sometimes a more pop feeling (ala the Chameleons UK or Joy Division/early New Order), but never really losing that, as vocalist Tony Lestat calls it in the liner notes, "'punk' with a classic horror film feel."
The liner notes include a short retrospective of the band Lestat, as well as song information and the line-up of the particular members involved with each song. The original members of Like Wreckage, other than Lestat, went on to join Warren Mansfield in Screams for Tina, while Lestat formed Wreckage with Bill E. Bones, (now known as William Faith, of Faith and the Muse, Shadow Project and Mephisto Walz).
At times the recording quality leaves much to be desired; some of the songs, never having been recorded in studio, were only available from live recordings. As Lestat says in the liner notes, "Try to deal with it." The songs themselves are in my opinion quite worth it, capturing the mood that made this style of music so enjoyable to me.
Mere Mortal Productions, PO Box 383 BU Station, Boston MA 02215
- Ray Nawara

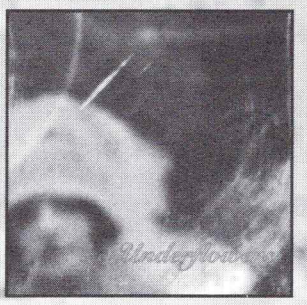
Various Artists
*Deepnet*
In the past few years, the art of creating sonic landscapes seems to have become somewhat of a cottage industry. Any artist who possessed a sequencer and a Larry Niven book began pulling sounds together and creating aural landscapes. Thankfully, the people who never should have ventured into this genre have fallen by the wayside and left behind a wide open field that, only now, is beginning to have beautiful "flowers" take root. One of the most impressive bouquets to have been picked is Side Effects Records' *Deepnet*. Tearing a page out of the Lustmord textbook and artfully expanding on the concepts written there, *Deepnet* offers some of the most inspirational ambient tracks I've heard in a long time. This lush two disc set features the impeccable work of artists like Robert Rich, Coma Virus, Atom Heart and two songs each from Psychophysicist and Monte Cazazza. The great thing here is that the songs track in at an average of around eleven minutes, so the listener gets a good long chance to be immersed into these ethereal netherworlds. The vistas these artists create here make for perfect late night listening enjoyment that will have you daring to check if there is anything under the bed.
Soleilmoon Recordings, PO Box 83296, Portland, OR 97283
- Solipsist

Underflowers
*Underflowers*
The artists signed to Bedazzled Records, one must admit, have a sound common enough to be in danger of forming a cliché. Underflowers has all the hallmarks of a Bedazzled band: a male and a female vocalist who take turns at the lead; slow, ponderous rhythms; the use of instruments belonging more to classical than to modern popular music. None of this, however, detracts from the enjoyment one can derive from listening to *Underflowers*. The quality of the

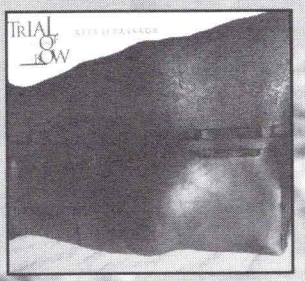


Adham Shaikh and Tim Floyd
*Drift*

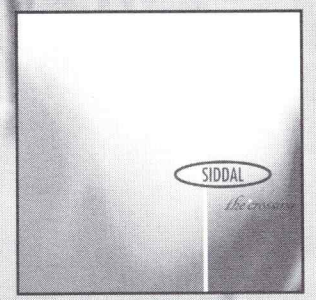

Various Artists
*Deepnet*


Underflowers
*Underflowers*

Somnambulist
*Somnambulist*




Trial of the Bow
*Rite of Passage*




Siddal
*The Crossing*

Various Artists
*Storm of Drones*

vocals and the music meet the consistently high standards that listeners can expect from Bedazzled. Two factors distinguish Underflowers from other bands of the dark ethereal set. First of all, on a visceral level, the tunes are really quite catchy, an attribute often marginalized by artists of the Projekt/Hyperium/Bedazzled genre, without descending into frivolity. More artistically speaking, the string sounds are more tightly integrated with the music and more ubiquitous than typical. For Underflowers, the use of strings is not merely a gimmick to spice up otherwise mundane and unimaginative music, but an important part of the instrumentals. Underflowers may not be furiously testing the boundaries of the musical taste of Bedazzled fans, but they do represent a small evolutionary step, and an extremely enjoyable one at that.
Bedazzled, PO Box 39195, Washington DC 20016
- Ben Colborn

Somnambulist
*Somnambulist*
Sooner or later, all things come back into vogue. In the late seventies/early eighties "progressive rock" was what defined the term "cutting edge" music. Now, in today's "modern" music, its impact can still be heard in the highly dynamic, musically intricate compositions that play in club after club in cities across America. Laser's Edge Records is a label out of Jersey who has re-released some of the most amazing albums of that genre and discovered bands who are taking all that was right about that style of music and pushed it forward into the nineties. Somnambulist is a band that brings some of the greatest moments of artists like King Crimson, Gong, Steve Hackett and Hoelderlin while still putting their own unique stamp on the music style. This new release, featuring art by Carpe Noctem cover artist Bonnie To, is a CD which fans of prog rock will appreciate as well as one which fans of bands such as Christian Death, Sister of Mercy and Joy Division should investigate to hear an exceptional example of the brand of music their idols have pillaged most of their ideas from. Greatly recommended!
Laser's Edge Records, PO Box 2450
Cherry Hill NJ 08034-0199
http://www.jersey.net/~lasercd
- Victor Pascow

Trial of the Bow
*Rite of Passage*
The sophomore effort of Trial of the Bow shows the Australian duo tapping into a broad range of musical and cultural pools, resulting in a lavish excursion from celebrations of life to explorations of primal existence. The instrumentation is primarily traditional Arabic and European, pulling heavily on strings, flutes and percussion rather than keyboards. Indeed, the fact that the textures were created by hand and mouth as opposed to buttons and knobs lends a unique human element to the impact of these compositions. The evident influences can be traced to many parts of the globe, and this hybrid of sounds filtered through the artists' visions is truly unique. "Father of the Flower" opens the disc, setting thoughtful yet tense tone by laying droning vocals over intricate percussion. The jovial "Ubar" follows, creating a mood of celestial rejoicing. Contrasting sharply with this is "Serpent," my favorite track, featuring a delicate Bansuri flute weaving a subtle melody over a strong, slow percussive undercurrent, much like the graceful and powerful coiling of a snake. "The Eyre of Awakening" forsakes strong structure for the bliss of heavily layered ambiance, a meshing of restful tones that build upon each other until climaxing triumphantly. European stylings are most evident in "The Court of the Servant," featuring a lonesome flute that abandons its sorrow for festivity as other instruments lend their company. This disc has an intensely personal edge and when combined with the meshing of styles and emotions, creates a sense of becoming and growth, a ceremonial rite of passage that is incredibly moving.
Release Entertainment, P.O. Box 251, Millersville PA 17551
- Andrew Corson

Siddal
*The Crossing*
From the first strains of Elaine Winters' sumptuous voice in the closing notes of this disc's final song, Siddal represents, by far, one of the biggest hopes for the darkly toned genre of music which we regularly feature in Carpe Noctem. Not since Faith and the Muse's *Elyria* or Love Spirals Downwards' *Ardor* have I been so taken with a duo's efforts. Ms. Winters' vocal tone seems so pure and unaffected laying deliciously over the musical texturing of partner Richard Brinkley. This is lush, beautiful, expressive music that cuts through the pseudo-Gothic rhetoric and acts to further document that melancholic music is changing, mutating into something which, soon, will crash through the radio imposed labeling and help redefine the definition of what "dark" music is capable. Even if I wanted to I would be hard pressed to find something not to like about Siddal. Vocally, they are magnificent. Musically, they are exquisite. Texturally, they present layer upon layer of aural delight that few other bands can match. Gee...do you think I liked this disc or what? Let's cut to the chase here... If you own Siddal's *The Crossing*, you already know what I'm talking about. If you don't, then you should. It's just that simple.
Bedazzled, PO Box 39195, Washington DC 20016
- Solipsist

Shinjuku Filth
*Junk*
A side project of gothic composers Shinjuku Thief, this unit (consisting of Thieves Darrin Verhaggen and Franc Tetazi) opts to turn industrial and electronics on their heads by toying with our preconceptions. Unlike the neoclassical ruminations of the past three Thief albums, *Junk* opts for the noisier approach of S.T.'s *Bloody Tourist*. (It could be considered its cousin.) And it's not easy to patly describe each track–but I'll attempt to anyway–as no two cuts sound alike on this album, which makes it refreshing. There's a lot to absorb: eerie ambient industrial ("Urashima Taro"), experimental Middle Eastern noise ("Bridge Sermon"), post-classical techno ("Vogelfrei II"), ethno-experimentalism ("Stroboscopic Photograph"), and aggro-industrial ("Showered In Glass"). *Junk* possesses a consistent sound and approach which makes this work as a whole, kind of like a journey through an experimental universe with predefined laws but not predefined expectations. Not every track is of the same quality, but overall it's pretty engaging. Another plus is that this album is just right at 41 minutes long–short, sweet and savory.
Full Contact, P.O. Box 787, Washington D.C. 20044
- Indigo

Various Artists
*Storm of Drones*
Asphodel Records has been quietly putting out some of the most gorgeous ambient music on the planet. Their *Throne of Drones* and *Swarm of Drones* collections have been favorites of mine since their releases. Now with this outstanding three disc collection, we get a smorgasbord of aural delights that is sure to please any discriminating palate. Featured here are some names you might have already heard of: Michael Stearns, Steve Roach, Stuart Dempster, Elliot Sharp, Robert Rich and Vidna Obmana. Each give the kinds of performances you would expect from artists of their caliber. However, I was most impressed by all of the musicians of whom I was not aware: Naut Humon, Robert Normandeau, Voice of Eye, Alan Lamb, Patrick Ascione and Maggi Payne, to name a few. Asphodel has crafted quite a little masterpiece. This is music to feed your soul and nourish your heart, and this collection stands as one of the best I've heard in the ambient genre.
Asphodel, PO Box 51, Chelsea Station, New York NY 10113
http://www.sombient.com
- Solipsist

Die Form
*lame electrique*
Die Form is, to me, the perfect example of the Darkwave sub-genre. In a wonderful blend of ethereal gothic and

industrial music, the beautiful voice of Eliane P. contrasts against the metallic edged monotone instrumentation of Philippe F. The music blends ethereal gothic-style wind and strings with an electronic beat and a dash of industrial noise, samples and effects. The lyrics are in both French and English, and tend to be simple and poetic, sung by either Eliane or Philippe, usually somewhat slowly, almost hypnotic in their presentation, with repetition of verse being a prominent feature. This, in addition to their use of words and method of singing, works to make the lyrics blend into the song almost as another instrument.
All of the songs are rather evocative of a mood, even though Eliane and Philippe do not directly sing so as to convey a specific emotion. However, due to the feel of the music as a whole, a mood still seems to be produced. A particular example of this can be heard in "La Somnambule" where subtle shifts in rhythm and tempo serve to produce changes in atmosphere.
Darkwave/Hyperium, PO Box 146-636 Chicago IL 60614
Hyperium Records, PO Box 910127-90259
Nurnberg, Germany
- Ray Nawara

Order of the Dying Knights
*Miranda*
Straight from Atlanta's Pelinor Records comes Order of the Dying Nights' *Miranda*. Here is a disc that your local spooky club should already be playing; if not, to quote Morrissey, "hang the DJ." Opening with a distinctly Middle Eastern feel that is juxtaposed with the rich male vocals of Joseph Sikes, this is perfect for those early hours when the club is just opening and solitary dancers are out on the floor dancing in a way that a friend once described as "bad Tai Chi." Fans of Dead Can Dance-inspired music will be all over the rich rhapsodies contained here. Order of the Dying Knights is a seven piece ensemble who utilize not only the standard "band" assemblage but augment their tone with the inclusion of a violin and what is described on the CD sleeve as polyphony vocals. Another nice thing here is that the percussionist, Dale Nacke by name, isn't the standard "hold down four" type of drummer. His use of intricate and, most important, interesting drum lines raises this above the porcelain faced poseurs that seem to all too often inhabit the scene. Yes sir, *Miranda* was a most pleasant surprise.
Pelinor Records, PO Box 78702, Atlanta GA 30357-2702
- Peter Kurtin

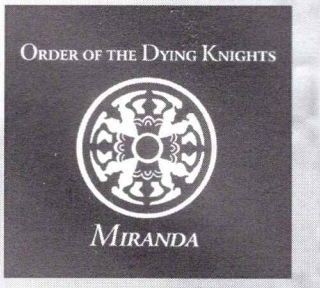
Deutsch Nepal
*Comprendido... Time Stop*
The musical vision of General Lina Baby Doll, the mastermind behind Deutsch Nepal, has become a staple in the Euro dark ambient/industrial circle known as Cold Meat Industry, and this latest offering, released in conjunction with Release Entertainment, actually breaks into untrodden ground. All of the elements we'd expect to find are here– discordant fields of noise between empty space punctuated by resonating percussive echoes; eerie samples, ranging from horror films to obscure bits of conversation, fade in and out like semi-hypnotized consciousness, all working in harmony to present a foreboding tone of electric doom. What keeps this fresh is the fine line it walks between amorphous atmosphere and structured song writing. Order is evident throughout, with sampled voices and industrial beats placed in carefully orchestrated sequences that bring tangibility to the abstract. In fact, by bridging gaps between glimpses of unexplored darkness, the familiar structure creates an extremely eerie effect, allowing the listener to become comfortable in the rhythm only to have it yanked away, leaving only gray waves of emptiness to search through. If a hybrid of Megaptera and In Slaughter Natives sounds appealing, this disc should serve well.
Release Entertainment, P.O. Box 251, Millersville, PA 17551
- Andrew Corson

Thymikon
*Nipsis*
Now, I must admit, when this CD arrived I put it into my player expecting the worst. It's media kit fairly dripped with religious rhetoric that, while I am sure it was a sincere statement by the artist, was a little off-putting. I'm not saying that I have anything against organized religion...ok, not much anyway...but it led me to believe that this was going to be some sort of Goth/Industrial Stryper or something. Instead, what I got on this disc was an intelligent ambient/gothic/industrial expression of one person's theology that was still easy to listen to and never once force fed me dogma like some crystal-methed Jehovah's Witness. Thymikon is the brain child of one Beau Gentry Branson and is, easily, one of the more impressive self-produced projects I have heard in some time. Highly danceable, intelligently written, with a distinct point of view to get across (unlike most other bands who are content to regurgitate the clichés of either KMFDM or rehash what Rozz Williams did years ago). Even if the philosophical outlook of its artist is not something you necessarily agree with, Thymikon *Nipsis* is well worth the time to check out.
Logistikon Records, 2000 Cheyenne Dr., Edmond OK 73013
- Victor Pascow

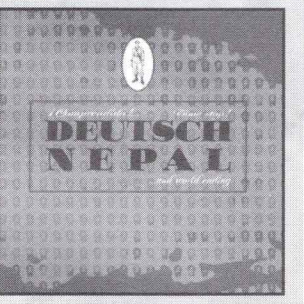
Kraftwelt
*Electric Dimension*
Contrary to popular belief, Kraftwelt (translation: "power world". Whatever.) does not consist of former members of Kraftwerk. It does not require massive insight to see where this misconception comes from: if the band-formerly-known-as-Kraftwerk started making very 90's ambient, it would probably sound a lot like Kraftwelt. Kraftwelt are hardly as innovative as Kraftwerk, but I cannot think of any band who is. Nevertheless, there is a certain really smooth but not innocuous feel to the sound textures. Beyond that, though, how much can one say about electronic ambient? It's ambient. The rhythms are slow, the obviously electronically-generated percussive sounds are soft, there are no coherent vocals. The use of Kraftwerk-esque synth riffs does distinguish Kraftwelt to some extent from other ambient musicians. In the end, it's still ambient, albeit groovy and enjoyable stuff.
Hypnotic, 8726 S. Sepulveda Blvd. Suite D-82
Los Angeles CA 90045
- Ben Colborn

Various Artists
*Trip Into Dub*
This little gem of a compilation comes to us from Hypnotic, a division of Cleopatra Records. A stunning collection of "experimental electronic grooves," I cannot recommend this one highly enough. Featuring the music of Omega Speaks, Wave, Controlled Bleeding and King Fahtie, this second disk (in what Hypnotic calls the "ambient rituals" series) is great for either passive listening or DJ mixing. Thrumming beats and electronic noodling are the mainstay on this disc, but whether you are a fan of this type of music or not, do not wait to get your hands on this one. Now, if only Cleopatra would shitcan all those abysmal reissues and generic spooky schlock they seem intent on flooding the market with and focus their considerable energies on quality products such as this...
Hypnotic, 8726 South Sepulveda, Suite D-82
Los Angeles CA 90045
- Solipsist

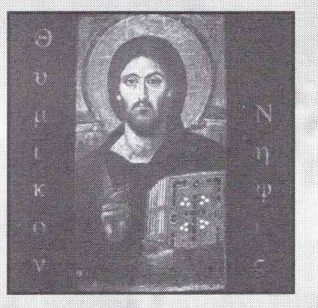
Faith & Disease
*livesongs: third body*
While their last outing was a bit more rock-based and "heavenly sounding", Faith & Disease offer other sides to their gothic sounds, painting a different picture here by showcasing their diversity: covering both a prog rock tune (Renaissance's "Ashes Are Burning") and an ethereal darkwave number (black tape for a blue girl's "Overwhelmed, Beneath Me") and presenting a tribal ambient intro from an F&D concert (most of the cuts are live). "Space Song" takes us into more stellar regions via airy, echoing guitar, trippy synths, lightly dancing percussion and ethereal vocals. "Witches" sounds quite folky, "Solobatia" hits hard rock territory and the rippling guitar at the start of "Violet" conjures up the Old West. Much of "livesongs" is mellow–darker and

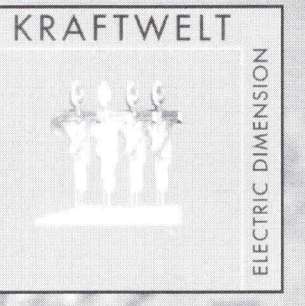


Order of the Dying Knights
*Miranda*

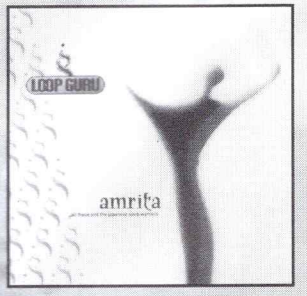


Deutsch Nepal
*Comprendido... Time Stop*

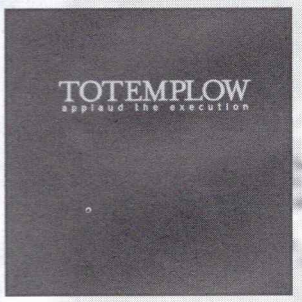

Thymikon
*Nipsis*



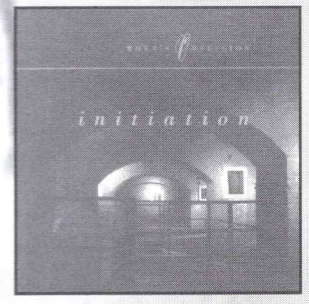
Kraftwelt
*Electric Dimension*



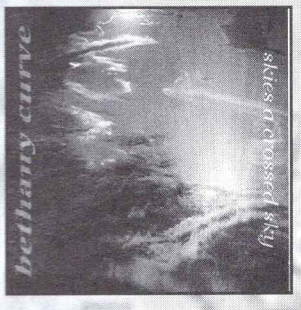

Loop Guru
*Amrita (all these and the Japanese soup warriors)*




Totemplow
*Applaud The Execution*




Rhea's Obsession
*Initiation*




Bethany Curve
*Skies a Crossed Sky*

spacier than other works–featuring reverberant guitar and flowing keyboards, not to mention consistently showcasing the lovely operatics of Dara Rosenwasser. While the group shifts gears frequently, the results are pretty cohesive and involving, and they get points for diversity. Fans of the band's earlier work might be surprised, but this is meant as an album of songs that would not be found on a typical F&D album. Just indulge the band, especially because this is a good album. It's nice to be surprised once in a while.
Ivy Records, P.O. Box 2721, Seattle WA 98111-2721
- Indigo

Loop Guru
*Amrita (all these and the Japanese soup warriors)*
The combining of dissimilar elements in music is a tricky thing. If one is not careful, one can end up with the sound equivalent of a train wreck, element after element heaped one upon the other in a cataclysm of misshapen ideas and contorted intentions. Luckily, these pitfalls have been skillfully avoided in the music of Loop Guru. I own another of this fine group's albums, the exquisite *Duniya* released on Waveform Records, so I went into this new release knowing a little of what I could expect. The music of Loop Guru is an odd amalgam of such things as middle eastern drum beats, ambient dance music, pop culture sampling and Gregorian chant-influenced vocal lines…think Brian Eno meets Deep Forest meets The Orb meets Arvo Part meets PIL and you start to get in the right neighborhood. *Amrita* is chock full of music that possesses the ability to achieve two things at once: being quiet, introspective music, and being so downright danceable that your feet start to move all by themselves. One other nice thing Loop Guru has achieved on this delightful album is even though they accomplish some lofty co-mingling of music styles and textural motifs, they never wipe the smile–the downright sense of fun–from their collective faces. The listener can almost feel them grinning behind their instruments while wringing some of the best damn music being released today. To me, that is definitely a good thing.
World Domination Recordings, PO Box 8097
Universal City Station, North Hollywood CA 91618-8097
http://www.imusic.com/worlddom
- Peter Kurtin

Totemplow
*Applaud The Execution*
The title of this disc immediately conjured an image in my mind of a large crowd leering, urging, pressing forward as a life is taken in the name of justice, be it just or not. I envisioned a loud, dense, bloodthirsty soundtrack to illustrate the frenzy of the slaughter. I was then taken aback by what I heard. While not necessarily uplifting, the seven tracks presented here are diverse, subtle pieces of layered guitar ambiance. The title track is the most dissonant, yet is structured by low end percussion to create an almost dub-like effect. "Terminate" catches the listener off guard with a melodic guitar intro which fades into dismal waves of tension over a voice speaking, "Terminate without rational thought." The high point of this disc is "100 Miles," continued two tracks later as "Conjouring Repetition." Heavy barrels of droning tones roll underneath a simple melody of bending notes, while high, sweet strings of sounds of hope that I find myself wishing will just hang out for a while drop subtly, quietly, acting as reminders of inevitable endings, lost dreams and crushed hope. What we have here is a reflection on the passing of life and the looming finality of death, and, more importantly, an exploration of the conflicting desires to resist or embrace the inevitable.
Manifold P.O. Box 12266 Memphis TN 38182
- Andrew Corson

Rhea's Obsession
*Initiation*
The music of Rhea's Obsession was once referred to as "space rock" by a reviewer in Toronto. After hearing the music created by this wonderful duo from the Great White North, one wonders exactly what it was said reviewer was ingesting to achieve that kind of warped perspective. Rhea's Obsession, in configuration, is not unlike a lot of duos who are making darkly ethereal music these days one woman vocalist who doubles on percussion and a male who handles most of the instrumental chores. We've seen this lineup in bands which seem to be springing up in the genre more and more these days. What makes Rhea's Obsession different is that the music never attempts to be anything but what it is: good, insightful and melancholic. Vocalist Sue Hutton's voice is rich, lush and gorgeous. The instrumentation and arrangements of Jim Field are intricate, beautiful and multi-layered. I was impressed by this disc the minute I first heard them on a Spider Records compilation entitled *Continuum.* So impressed in fact I that I immediately got in touch with them requesting this new album. In this disc, the Celtic influence is well done, yet not overblown, infusing the wailing guitar and allowing it to serve as a contemporary accent in an otherwise traditional background. I must admit, I'm quite taken by Rhea's Obsession and their music. If Rhea's Obsession is any indication, there are a lot of really talented bands up there in Canada patiently waiting for the rest of us to wake up and take notice.
Spider Records, PO Box 6625. Station A,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5W 1X4
- Carnell

Bethany Curve
*Skies a Crossed Sky*
Much to my grim delight, I have never really outgrown my teen angst. The problem (or at least one of the most glaring existential ones) is that no one makes the music that fed it Joy Division, The Cure or The Smiths anymore. No one, that is, except Bethany Curve. The music that has darkened my life from age 14 to the present (21 now) can be found on *Skies a Crossed Sky*. It's all there, from the dull, heavy percussion to the borderline whiny vocals. Were the vocals not hidden beneath layers of electronically-filtered, razor-sharp guitars, the lyrics would likely be about your typical emotional agony-inspiring situations. But their loss among the oppressive music adds to the weighty atmosphere built by Bethany Curve. Though this recording carries on the tradition of the finest of 80's gloom-rock, it never sounds stale, but maybe that's just because my old worn-out copy of *Faith* does. Bethany Curve breathes a bit of new life into this part of my music collection. I think it will help sustain my teen angst for the next seven years, as it can for you.
Unit Circle Rekkids, PO Box 20352, Seattle WA 98102
- Ben Colborn

Lull
*Continue*
Mick Harris returns with the latest installment under his Lull moniker. Featuring one piece clocking in at 62 minutes, the aptly titled *Continue* is once again an excursion into the quiet side of Harris. And though quiet it may be, complacent it absolutely is not. Stacked drones of crimson-colored repetition flow upwards, climbing, soaring to elatious heights, only to topple, plummeting like pieces of a broken heart or shattered dream to menacing depths. Layer upon layer of ethereal sound is draped to form thick curtains shuddering with subtle motion, in and out…floating…drifting…continuing…above the forlorn shadows holding dismal court somewhere below. The mood here is one of fighting against the inevitable, a tug-of-war between the powers of sweet fantasy and stark reality, coming to a climax, yet returning full circle to end close to the beginning. The music is beatless, yet it rolls with purpose and organization not always found in bleak ambient stylings. For full, visceral effect, I recommend listening to this at a higher than normal volume, but headphones will give a unique perspective to the many undertows busy beneath the slowly shifting surface.
Release Entertainment P.O. Box 251, Millersville PA 17551
-Andrew Corson

Various Artists
*Organism .04*
This beat oriented ambient collection comes domestically distributed from the good folks at Com Four and features a lot of bands that I'd never heard of. While not entirely "dark" in tone, the compilation still works quite well as late

night listening when drones just won't cut it. *Organism .04* features the work of such artists as Deviator, Tri-Pod, Digital White Noise and two songs from Nigel. Not exactly household names on these shores but, for fans of this kind of music, they sure ought to be. While, on the surface, most of the songs here sound a little bit "happy," there is an underlying darkness that permeates the melodies and makes for an interesting listening experience. Most of the material here should appeal to fans of dance-ambient and industrial music alike. The tracks are tight, melodic and exceedingly danceable. If you were ever curious about this style of music, then *Organism .04* just might be an excellent place in which to start your investigations.
Dossier Records, Koloniestr. 25 A, D-13359 Berlin
Com Four, 7 Dunham Pl., Brooklyn NY 12211
- Solipsist

You Shriek
*Burn Something Dear*
The music of You Shriek seems to belong to the mild EBM category, but for me it has a more pop sound. The best comparisons which come to mind are Northern European bands such as Deine Lakaien, De/Vision and Wolfsheim, who are unfortunately all but unknown in this country. In short, what we have here is this: unquestionably electronic- and beat-based music with a splash of traditional instruments thrown in for variety, topped by a (get this) undistorted male voice. The rhythms are less brutal than EBM/Industrial, more reminiscent of later Depeche Mode and Front 242 than Læther Strip or X Marks the Pedwalk. Another difference arises in the vocals: for one, you can actually understand the lyrics, which are mostly about personal problems in a decidedly unhappy but not overdone way. I would have trouble classifying You Shriek as anything but pop, but that's mainly because it radiates no pretension. It's not trying to be the most goth, most industrial, most whatever: You Shriek is terribly satisfying dark electronic pop.
Mere Mortal, PO Box 383, BU Station, Boston MA 02215
- Ben Colborn

Original Soundtrack
*House by the Cemetery/Manhattan Baby*
God bless those crazy kids over at Blackest Heart Media and Graveside Entertainment. They've begun a campaign to bring the films of Lucio Fulci to a wider audience and this soundtrack is only the first of the projects on which they've embarked. As many of you know, I am a huge Fulci fan. The man was a genius and his films were some of the most audacious and visceral ever made. This new release crams the music of his film *House by the Cemetery* along with the little known Manhattan Baby. When I first popped this little gem into my player I thought there was some kind of mistake. The music sounded like those Italian film composers extraordinaire, Goblin. The way the bass carried the majority of the thematic line, the syncopated drum line, hell, there was even the trademark pipe organ. However, upon closer inspection I saw that the score to *House* was written by Romano Rizzati and *Manhattan Baby* was composed by Fulci regular Fabio Frizzi. I had spent many an hour at conventions looking for this music and I am pleased to say that Blackest Heart and Graveside have taken a fan's care with this package. Included here are not only the great music, but interviews with Fulci "femme entraile" Catriona MacColl, commentary by Fulci fanatic Sage Stallone and the audio track from the original *House by the Cemetery* trailer film. This is the disc that all Fulci fans have wished for, but only thought they'd see when they died and went to Splatter Heaven. And to top it all off, an unlisted track featuring some of the boys at Blackest Heart tells of an exciting upcoming project called *For Lucio Fulci: A Symphony of Fear* which will feature music by bands who are fans of the Maestro. The list is very impressive: GWAR, Mike Scaccia (Ministry and Rigor Mortis), Alex Wank (Pungent Stench), Pino Donnaggio (film composer) and Graveside's flagship band, Alucarda. Man, is this a dream come true or what? Until that project comes to fruition, we can all be quite satisfied with the scores to *House by the Cemetery* and *Manhattan Baby*. As one of Blackest Heart's bumper stickers proudly proclaims: FULCI LIVES!
Blackest Heart Media, PO Box 3376, Antioch CA 94531-3376
Graveside Entertainment, 1857 Wells Rd., Suite 230, Orange Park FL 32073
- Carnell

**The Reading Room:**

*Confessions of an English Opium Eater*
Thomas de Quincey
Original Publishing Date: 1821
(No publisher's info as book is in public domain and has several editions available currently)
This forgotten and controversial classic is, simply, one of the true masterpieces of English prose. Published originally in *The London Magazine* in serial form, this short book is an autobiographical account of the opium addiction of Thomas de Quincey, and as such is as topical today as it was when published. Today's opiate is heroin rather than the less sinister, and highly romanticized, Laudanum, but the effects and the addiction's consequences are no less real. If this were just another drug horror story, however, it would not be worth reading 150 years later.
Thomas de Quincey was born in Manchester in the year 1785. A promising scholar of Greek, a skill considered mandatory for educated men of his class, he began taking opium at Worcester College. Originally he drank opium to relieve the terrible abdominal pains caused by being on the edge of starvation for an extended period of time in his youth, and partly, doubtless, under the influence of the example of Samuel Taylor Coleridge whose habit was well known in England and who had announced that he had written that beautiful poem about Kubla Khan under its spell. This book established his literary reputation, and later he became known as a great critic and a leader of the Romantic movement.
The book is divided into three Parts. The first tells of his upbringing, and his experiences as a starving runaway in London; it ends with the poignant story of the prostitute Ann, a friend won and lost in that hostile London. The second Part is called "The Pleasures of Opium" and Part Three is called "The Pains of Opium." Though his subject is not a comfortable one for many of us, the way he treats of it has earned him the praise of critics for generations. Controversial as some believed he was not being firm enough in his condemnation of the habit, I cannot believe that those who felt that way ever read it.
De Quincey's prose style is like none other in the English language. There is nothing experimental or self consciously "artistic" about it, but each phrase and sentence builds to form a seamlessly crafted image. Through the lens of the opium he has showed the beauty in the simplest elements of our existences; the impoverished child, the faces of the dead and the disenfranchised in the midst of what was then the largest, grandest city in the world. De Quincy does not apologize or complain like our modern victims, but, rather, turns the text into the very heart of artistic endeavor: to describe the indescribable, to express the unutterable.
It is said, and the readers of this magazine are hardly likely to disagree, that all great cities show their characters by night, and it is by night that we see London.
*"Oftentimes by moonlight nights, during my first mournful abode in London, my consolation was (if such it could be thought) to gaze from Oxford Street up every avenue in succession which pierces northwards through the heart of Marlybone to the fields and woods"*
That in this city, in "…Oxford Street, stony-hearted stepmother," he could find, and later place on mere paper, that highest expression of love, which we used to call Platonic, in the fragile and soiled white form of Ann haunting the city nights not some banal virgin is, possibly, his highest accomplishment. Bound to the city as a spirit to its body, this love story is, as all love stories are, fraught with the apprehension of loss and parting. Her loss is vividly, though never maudlinly, shown through the passionate wound it left.
This is no occasion to discuss the question of the drug itself.

You Shriek
*Burn Something Dear*

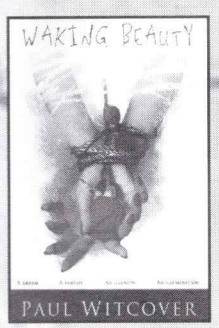
Various Artists
*Organism .04*

Original Soundtrack
*House by the Cemetery/Manhattan Baby*

*Convergence*
Sharon Green
Avon Books

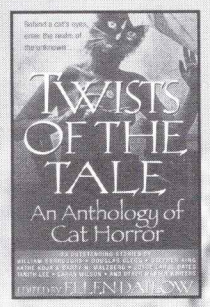
The drug is but a vehicle, not the destination. There are several editions of this book available, and I suggest that you find one that has been left in the exact form it was originally published serially. Later editions were contrived in more literary form, but, as in many translations, the edge of the meaning was somehow lost. No reader will be able to read this thin volume without having his ideas of literature challenged: This is not the sterile social commentary of, say, an Austen, or the heavy moralizing of Dostoevsky, though elements of both exist. This was written by an educated man of considerable mental powers for an educated audience, and while the brief references in Greek and Latin will make the images clearer for those who can read them, they are not mandatory.
- Karl Johnson

*Convergence*
Sharon Green
Avon Books
I have one real gripe with this book: it ends with the sentence "We had other problems, big and small, and the first thing to happen was…" Yes, it does state that it is *Book One of the Blending* on the cover, but as cliffhangers go, this takes the cake. Conversely, the book also left me wanting to read the next book immediately. While it's not the most exquisitely written prose I've read recently, it is a rather good fantasy story. The plot is the high fantasy staple "hero discovers great magical power and begins an apprenticeship that will lead to a great destiny" with a twist: there are five heroes. The book is narrated from the point of view of one of them, with the chapters not directly about her still containing something of a personal bias thrown in. The first half of the book starts off rather formulaicly, each chapter being about a different character and how they react to nearly identical situations. Although rather repetitive, this became interesting enough in that all the characters had a somewhat different viewpoint of the situations they were in. It was interesting to watch that, as well as watch the characters develop as they interacted in the third quarter of the book, which mostly relates to their meeting and becoming companions.
The world depicted within this story is one of high sorcery, where all people have some degree of magical power in one of five aspects: Air, Earth, Fire, Spirit and Water.
The preface to the book describes some history to the world, and introduces the prophecy that a second "Great Blending" will arise and defeat the tyrannical "Dreaded Four," again, a plot device quite common in high fantasy.
This book mostly involves introducing the main characters and describing their world. I found *Convergence* to be quite enjoyable, and am definitely waiting for next book in the series. Though a bit repetitive in its composition, it contained some quality that kept me engrossed, and eventually I came to empathize with the main characters. If you're one who enjoys high fantasy, this is definitely a worthwhile book to read.
- Ray Nawara




*Waking Beauty*
Paul Witcover
Harper Prism

*Waking Beauty*
Paul Witcover
Harper Prism
Hierarchate is a strange world where each social caste lives in its own city. Men are the rulers of each village, however women are their nightly protectors. Every evening, a dangerous and mesmerizing scent drifts out of Herwood Forest into each of the Hierarchate villages, luring men into certain death by the Maw if their women fail to keep them home, safe and sound.
Cyrus Galingale seeks revenge towards the family that betrayed and destroyed his own family, once part of the highest rung in the hierarchy. Cyrus plans to marry Rose Rubra, an act that should protect Cy from the ravages of the forbidden scent of the Maws, hiding in the nearby Herwood forest. Unfortunately, Rose fails to protect Cy, who succumbs to the siren's call on their wedding night. She is to be punished for her failure to protect her mate by being turned into a prostitute however, other plans are being placed in motion that will keep Rose on the move throughout this weird world and Cy has another love, Rumer, thought lost to the mists of the forest. How all this eventually plays out on the world stage requires a trip to Hierarchate by the reader.
*Waking Beauty* is an eerie but beautiful fantasy novel that seems more of a parable of a decadent society (perhaps America?) rather than another Tolkien clone. This new world brings a freshness to Paul Witcover's debut novel that is rarely seen in the genre. This is must reading for anyone who enjoys a trek to a weird other world, and it will leave readers wanting more from newcomer Paul Witcover.
- Harriet Klausner




*Twists of the Tail: An Anthology of Cat Horror*
Edited by Ellen Datlow
Dell Books

*The Unified Field*
Mark Leon
Avon Books
This is a bizarre work of science fiction that reminds me strongly of a blend of Douglas Adams and Robert Anton Wilson. It takes place in pretty much modern day earth, and the first characters we encounter are Ira Summerset, a newspaper reporter, and Alex Fain, a mysterious and strange inventor. Summerset and Fain meet in a bar, and from that point on Summerset's life becomes, to put it mildly, odd. The reader is then taken on a journey across the solar system and introduced to weird concepts such as levity, (the force that opposes gravity,) old alien bases on the moon, the secret of Atlantis, alien goddesses, the Holy Grail and strange games of tennis.
*The Unified Field* has a sense of humor. While not an out and out comedy, like Douglas Adams' works, it definitely made me laugh at times, and it definitely doesn't take itself too seriously–the author makes sure to take a few jabs at himself within its pages. The science is vague but not greatly implausible, and the characters, though a bit larger than life, are nicely developed as well as amusing. Mark Leon also wrote *Mind-Surfer* and *The Gaia War*, and some of the characters in this story were in those, a fact made obvious by his frequent use of footnotes referring to the previous works. Although this tactic seemed a bit blatant and awkward to me, I found this book enjoyable enough that I intend to hunt out its pseudo-prequels.
- Ray Nawara

*Twists of the Tail: An Anthology of Cat Horror*
Edited by Ellen Datlow
Dell Books
Once worshipped by the Egyptians and later slaughtered by the hundreds by their fearful owners in the Dark Ages, cats have always been looked upon as mysterious creatures. It was not until the late eighteenth century that cats began to regain their popularity, but some of the myths from those dark times linger with us still.
When I first picked out this book I did not know what to expect. After all, it is a collection of short stories written by a plethora of well-known writers, not to mention that I have not had much luck finding a short story compilation that I liked. Thankfully, this has all changed–the book was fantastic and spellbinding. The stories were gruesome, eerie and just plain weird. There are no silly overdrawn introductions, instead you are thrown instantly into the intriguing stories. One of the most vivid scenes left in mind is one where a cat shoves itself into a man's mouth. It goes into much detail and left me with a tingling sensation in my spine. I'll never look at cats in the same light again.
Some of the authors included here are William Burroughs, Joyce Carol Oates, Gahan Wilson, and, perhaps the most well known of all, Stephen King. The format of this book is great for some one who does not have the patience or time to read a long book. They can read these short stories and still get their thrills. It's a definite winner.
- Patricia Caldwell

*Metropolitan*
Walter Jon Williams
Harper Prism
This latest novel by Walter Jon Williams, well known in the cyberpunk circles for the classics *Hardwired,* and *Voice of the Whirlwind*, and one of my favorite novels, *Aristoi,* once again shows his ability to move beyond the standard fare and delve into the realms of the unknown. *Metropolitan* takes place on an Earth of the far future, yet an Earth that at first glance seems only slightly different from our own.

Yes, the planet is covered by one great city, and surrounded by the Shield, an impenetrable barrier placed there by the enigmatic Malakas, but people are still people, and life carries on as usual, but with one major twist: plasm. Plasm is the stuff of magic, pure power that can be shaped by human will, and it is the most important resource in this city that covers the world. Plasm can do anything (except penetrate the Shield) given the proper force of will behind it. Of course, in this city, nearly every source of Plasm is controlled and metered by the government. That is where our main character Aiah comes in. It seems someone has found a hitherto unknown well of plasm. Of course, the explorer's initial contact with this energy source turned her into a fifty foot burning woman who wreaked havoc in the streets until she was destroyed, but this only highlights the amount of power contained in the hidden well. It's Aiah's job, as an employee of the Plasm Authority, to find this well.
I found *Metropolitan* to be a gripping book, full of intrigue and suspense, and wonderfully woven around the concept of Plasm and how it would shape the world. Once again Walter Jon Williams has managed to step beyond the limits of any particular sub-genre and create a completely new world.
- Ray Nawara

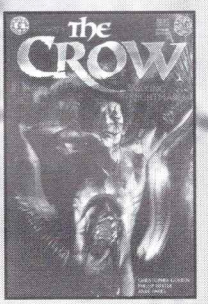
*Sheep*
Simon Maginn
White Wolf Publishing
Building contractor James Tullian feels like he has rapidly aged since the accidental drowning death of his little girl, Ruthie. His wife, Adele, an artist, also struggles with her grief. For their seven year old son Sam, Ruthie's death was more than just losing a sibling, he has his own sorrow and little parental help to get him through it. Finally, the mourning family decides they need to temporarily get away from the haunting memories so they move to a sheep-farming town in Wales to recover.
Initially, the estate seems perfect. James can use his building skills to renovate the house. Adele has the quiet and serenity in which to paint. Sam has plenty of places to explore and do all the things little boys do. However, the idyll scenario soon turns nightmarish. James digs up a pile of bones, Adele starts drawing grim, morbid paintings, and Sam begins to have fits and sees things. The locals think that their new neighbors are under the control of the malevolent forces that have destroyed previous tenants. Have the Tullians left one horror only to succumb to a more deadly one?
Wales already has the reputation for magic and supernatural occurrences. However, Wales has never had Simon Maginn paint strange happenings there before this great horror novel, *Sheep*. The locale will never be the same. This novel is modern horror at its most Poe-like atmosphere while the story line moves faster than the speed of light. Barker fans take notice, the next great name in the genre has surfaced.
- Harriet Klausner

*House of Secrets*
Steven T. Seagle & Teddy Kristiansen
Vertigo
Just when you thought that all Vertigo was releasing were *Sandman* reprints, *Legends of the Golden Bough*-inspired books and *Preacher*, along comes *House of Secrets* to change your mind for you. *House* is the tale of Rain, a street smart, bold-as-tacks survivor who has traveled to Seattle to escape an abusive homelife. Upon her arrival, she meets up with Traci, a literal "babe in the woods" cut adrift on the mean streets. Traci takes Rain to the place she's been crashing and, during the night, Rain meets up with the real owners of the house, the ghostly court who nightly put on trial various people who harbor secrets. Rain is told that it is she who must bear witness to the litigations and must, ultimately, pass judgment on the accused. While I am no huge fan of the style of art utilized in this book, it somehow works in conjunction with the story told therein. *House of Secrets* is one of the most intellectually written, smoothly paced, and down right imaginative books I've seen in a long time. The characters are strong, the plot stands solid, and the subtle interplay between Rain and her surroundings is a beauty to behold. *House of Secrets* is, by no means, a "feel good" book. Its themes are adult and often brutal in their telling. The occurrences in the story are told with the same eye for truth that the Court of Secrets demands of its accused. Bold and confrontational, *House of Secrets* is easily one of the best comics being printed today.
- Carnell

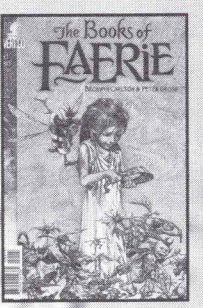
*The Crow: Waking Nightmares #1*
Chistopher Golden & Phillip Hester
Kitchen Sink Press
Right out of the gate I want to say that Miran Kim's cover of this book is one of the most beautiful things I've seen. It's lush, dream-like, and incredibly moving. Now, that said, I haven't been too much of a fan of the series of *The Crow* books Kitchen Sink has put out. For the most part, they have been formulaic and have suffered from the writer's desire to add to the existing mythos. The art has been spotty at best. Alexander Maleev's work on *Dead Time* and *Flesh and Blood* was nice, but lacked a sense of immediacy. John Mueller's covers for *Wild Justice* were great, but the interior art was mediocre. Frankly, I'm not too sure how much longer this series can continue if it is allowed to lumber in the direction it has been. Thankfully, *Waking Nightmares* seems to be attempting to break the cycle that the other books in the series have been perpetuating. Its hero is different. The identity of the innocents who are put in harm's way makes the sense of danger all the more real (however, why the crow isn't willing to let the hero save them is anybody's guess). In *Waking Nightmares* we are introduced to Mark Leung, a cop who, along with his wife, were murdered and their two daughters abducted by thugs who make child pornography their trade. Anyway, along comes the crow to lead Mark back from the dead to avenge his wife's and his murders. The biggest plot problem I have here is that Leung's death is nothing that doesn't happen in every city, every day. If the crow brought back every person who was murdered unjustly then we'd be hip deep in guys with nifty makeup who were unhurt by flying bullets. Also, why the crow doesn't allow Mark to save his daughters is a plot device we've seen a thousand times. The bottom line of it is: *The Crow: Waking Nightmares* is not the personal expression of grief that James O'Barr's book was, but it is an interesting alternative take on the mythos he created.
Now…if only they'd give cover artist, Miran Kim, a painted book in which to shine.
- Ben Richards

*The Books of Faerie #1*
Bronwyn Carlton & Peter Gross
Vertigo Comics
Picking up where *Sandman*, *The Dreaming* and *Books of Magic* leave off is Vertigo's latest entry into the fantasy market, *The Books of Faerie*. This nicely done book begins with some quick reintroduction by way of a short conversation between Auberon and Titania of Faerie which takes place under the watchful eyes of Timothy Hunter and Molly O'Reilly. Those of you who have read *Books of Magic* will be all too familiar with the plot that has transpired between these folks. *The Books of Faerie* takes off from there with the tale of young Mary Rose, a poor young girl from Olde England who is lured from her home to the wilds of Faerie where she becomes Queen Dympha's friend and companion. She grows into a into a fair damsel and is given the name Rosebud. Upon the King's return, we learn that all is not peaceful in Faerie for the King demands an heir, but Queen Dympha has, so far, been unable to deliver one. Soon, the plottings of the King become apparent as does his plan for young Lady Rosebud. I found *The Books of Faerie* to be a worthy successor to all that took place in *Books of Magic* and look forward to the further explanation of this wonderful realm. Bronwyn Carlton's writing shows that the subject matter is something he is familiar with and the art by Peter Gross is some of this artist's best. If you have enjoyed *Sandman* and *Books of Magic*, then I say unequivocally that *The Books of Faerie* is a monthly comic that you will also enjoy.
- Carnell

*House of Secrets*
Steven T. Seagle &
Teddy Kristiansen
Vertigo



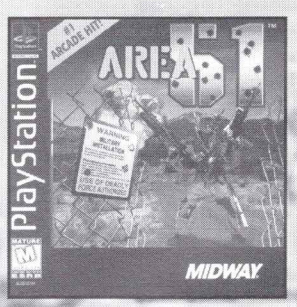

*The Crow: Waking Nightmares #1*
Chistopher Golden & Phillip Hester
Kitchen Sink Press




*The Books of Faerie #1*
Bronwyn Carlton & Peter Gross
Vertigo Comics

*Hellshock*
Jae Lee

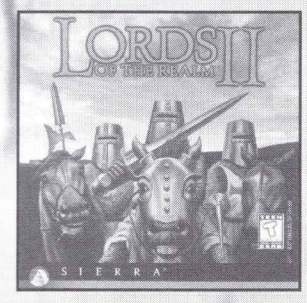
*Hellshock #1*
Jae Lee
Image
Ok…I know that the year is young, but…
*Hellshock* is the most impressively written book I've read all year. With this one issue, it has climbed into my personal Top 10. Jae Lee has accomplished something truly impressive here. The art is beautiful, possessing just the right tone of inherent sadness. The writing is tight, crisp, and evocative. Jae Lee has done an impeccable job in the crafting of this book. *Hellshock #1* is the tale of a young psychiatric intern named Christina and her introduction to the real world of psychiatric analysis. With each successive panel, Lee paints a claustrophobic world of madness and despair both for the patients and those who would try to help them. Overworked and overloaded by the backlog of patients, Christina finds that her chosen vocation is not about quick fixes and wishing the cured patient well. What she finds instead is a nightmare world of humanity cut adrift on a sea of madness by an uncaring bureaucracy. At the height of her despair, Christina meets a patient named Daniel whose plight touches both her heart and her professional curiosity. While some readers may already have an idea of what is in store for them (having already read the *Hellshock* mini-series) the rest of you have been given a great opportunity her by being presented with a perfect "jumping on point" for a truly impeccably written and sumptuously drawn series. Based upon what is set up in this first issue, I anxiously await this series' continuation.
- Carnell




*Area 51*
Midway

**The Strategem's Colonnade:**

*Area 51*
Midway
Sony Playstation
There is something inherently satisfying about wandering through hallways with a gun in hand shooting beasties and baddies. Well, here's the opportunity to bring murder and mayhem into the confines of your living room. The plot of *Area 51* is simple enough: big, bad aliens have landed and turned the inhabitants of this military into murderous zombies. Now, it is your job to go in and clean the mess up. *Area 51* is a game that is one hell of a lot of fun. The action is fast. The gameplay is furious. Hell, even the bodies of the zombies you kill explode quite nicely. The only draw back to this game that I could find is that you pretty much need to purchase the gun peripheral to have a rockin' good time. I don't mean to say that game play is impossible using the controller, it's just that having a gun that jumps to wherever you aim sure does cut down on your response time and with the speed at which some of these buggers come at you, you're going to need all the speed you can get. Graphically, *Area 51* is astounding with realistic looking monsters and a smoothly scrolling screen. From what I could tell there is no degeneration from arcade to Playstation play.
- Ben Richards




*Lords of the Realm II*
Sierra

*Lords of the Realm II*
Sierra
PC
If you even remotely enjoyed *Lords of the Realm*, you'll love the sequel. The game concept is the same, you're a medieval lord fighting it out with four other lords for the crown. Normal gameplay takes place over a strategic map of the realms. You can order your peasants to make goods or harvest the land, deal with traveling merchants or issue troop movement commands. Once you pick a fight, the view switches to a more personal up-close view reminiscent of *Warcraft II* (Blizzard) where you command them in realtime combat.
If you treat your peasants well and act honorably, you are sure to be hailed as a good leader in your homeland. Your homeland will end up burned and pillaged, however. Nice guys finish dead. You have to push your peons to the limit of revolt to produce the most goods. If they get a little too restless, buy them some ale. Apparently drunk peasants don't revolt. You have to make alliances and then break them by burning down your neighbor's villages and slaughtering his livestock when he's not looking. Only corrupt, backstabbing, power hungry warmongers grow up to be king.
- Warpath

*Reloaded*
Interplay

*Star Gladiator*
Capcom
Playstation
If you are a fan of fighting games and have grown bored with the likes of *Mortal Combat* and *Street Fighter,* you can now rest easy. *Star Gladiator,* the newest entry in the field, is hot off the presses from Capcom. Similar in many respects to *Battle Arena Toshinden,* but blowing it away in both graphics and game play, *Star Gladiator* is an ass kickin' good time. Now, admittedly, I am not a big fan of these types of games (in fact I own maybe four or so), but here, finally, is a game that is both dynamic in the different ways you can attack, but also offers fully rendered backgrounds that scroll nicely and never once inhibit the flow of the game. The whole time I played *Star Gladiator* I was both challenged and exhilarated by the speed, dexterity and nastiness of the characters. All in all, since getting my hands on this game, I've put all of the other fighting games on the shelf.
- Ben Richards

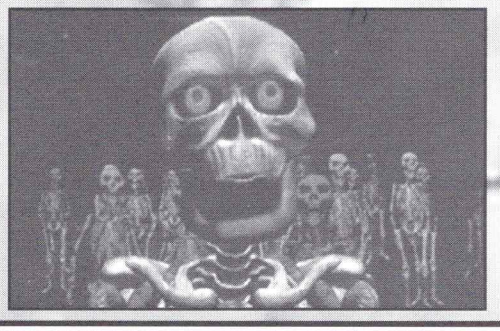
*Reloaded*
Interplay
Playstation
First, let me say that I liked *Loaded* a lot…a helluva lot. Its cartoony style of splatter and vicious sense of humor won me over from the first screen. I'll admit that I did have a problem with the running around you had to do in order to get the appropriate keys and such, but, all in all, it was a lot of fun to play. Now, those sick individuals at Interplay have gone the whole concept one better with *Reloaded.* They've gotten rid of some of the characters who, quite frankly, deserved it and brought in several others who just plain kick ass, particularly Sister Magpie who is a "roving Cyber Nun" who shoots first and asks for a confession later. The basic layout of the game is the same only Interplay has listened to the small number of complaints regarding *Loaded* and suped up the whole shebang into one rompin' good time. I've been playing this game solid for about a week now and, so far, my complaints are pretty minimal: there are times when the screen's viewpoint is obstructed by trees and walkways and you end up just shooting blindly hoping that the bad guys will just go away. As I said, pretty minimal. *Reloaded* is the perfect game for those who like the splatter effects of *Doom,* but want a sick sense of humor to boot. Just remember, sometimes, the action in *Reloaded* seems so real, you might want to wear a raincoat while playing it.
- Ben Richards

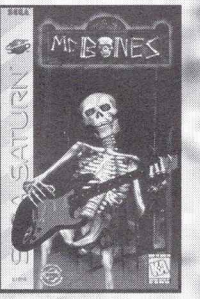
*ZPC*
GT Interactive Software/Zombie
PC
This first-person shooter has a hip, dark feel that doesn't quite fit in with the other members in the genre, such as *Quake* or *Marathon.* It's not because of a lack of violence, the game tracks your kpm (kills per minute)! No, *ZPC's* uniqueness comes from the overall feel of the game. It's a beautiful cross between a Frank Miller comic book and the movie *Heavy Metal.*
You are Arman, the last of the royal line of God-Kings, back from your exile in outer space. Your memory is gone, but your faithful servants greet you to tell of the horrors that have transpired in your absence. The Black Brethren now rule the world. People live in concentration camps and are either brainwashed and pressed into service or are slain in massive human processing plants. The Brethren feast on the souls of those who are slaughtered.
You are the Warrior Messiah, come to save your people and kill all the bad guys. The resistance has planned for your return by stockpiling and hiding caches of weapons and ammunition for your use. You must use all your weapons and skill to battle through minions and monsters to obtain the five relics of the Ancient Kings. Once you have the relics, you'll be able to wield the Sword of Psionicus Rex and return peace to the world. Highly recommended
- Warpath

*Lighthouse*
Sierra Online
Mac/PC

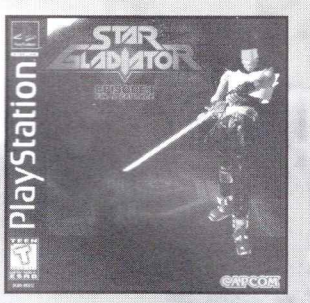
If you like roaming about in unknown lands, solving puzzles, and just trying to make sense of your surroundings you will definitely enjoy Sierra's *Lighthouse.* The story for your character, begins on a stormy night in your living room. As you move your mouse exploring around the room, you find your answering machine has a message from your friend urging you to come to his house immediately. When you get there you see your friend's baby daughter being kidnapped by this scary dark figure. The figure disappears into the portal from whence it came. At this time you can either follow them into the portal or look around the house some more. When you eventually go through the portal you are swept off to another world. Your goal is to save the baby, find your friend, and somehow get back home.
To succeed you must be creative, imaginative and logical. Your ability to put two and two together will be tested. The more exploring you do the more clues you will find. This game is similar to *Myst* (Broderbund) and has many qualities like Sierra's other game *Shivers.*
- Patricia Caldwell

*Mr. Bones*
Sega Saturn
Okay...Mr.Bones. First off, the thing that gets you is the opening animation. Yessss, full motion video is always just fancy garnishing on a game, and does very little, if anything for actual gameplay. But it's just so cool watching these skeletons rise from the grave to the beat of this cheesy, balding vampire guy. It's actually pretty beautiful looking.
The music is another strong strong point, thick with some trippy blues style pieces by Ronnie Montrose. Sega's selling the soundtrack alone in record stores.
As for gameplay, it shines and stinks. This is mainly due to the fact that the game is broken up into dozens of minigames in which the controls and goals are changed from the last little section. Most of these games are pretty fun, resembling the self contained little games of the 80's in which the purpose is just so focused, it makes for a quick learning curve. It can get tedious though, after enough playing, but it's so detailed, it's nice to just watch.
The game really is pretty bizarre, making me laugh out loud at times at just how freaky some of the imagery is. There's just something wonderful about seeing Mr. Bones hop around on his pelvic bone with no arms.
What's nice is that when you a complete a level, you can play that level anytime you want, as the games are stored in the Saturn's internal memory. My favorites include the guitar solo level (cheesy as hell) and the joke telling level (cheesy as hell frozen over).
It's one of the prettiest, most eclectic games to be put out in a while.
- Mr. Eff

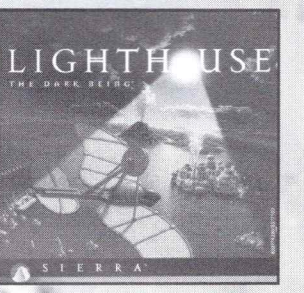





*Mr. Bones*
Sega




*Star Gladiator*
Capcom




*Lighthouse*
Sierra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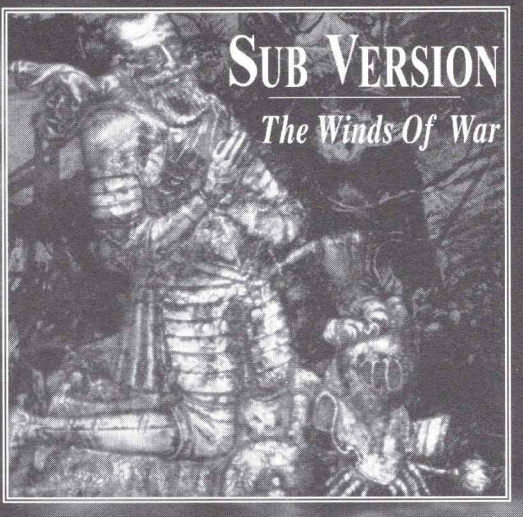


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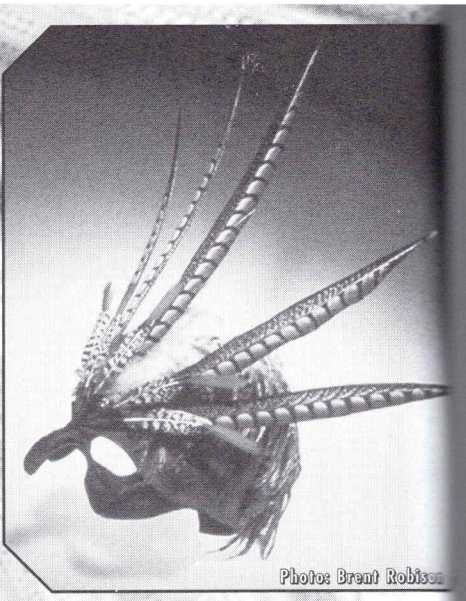
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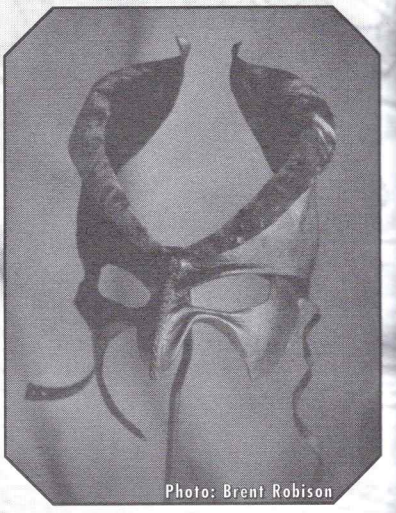
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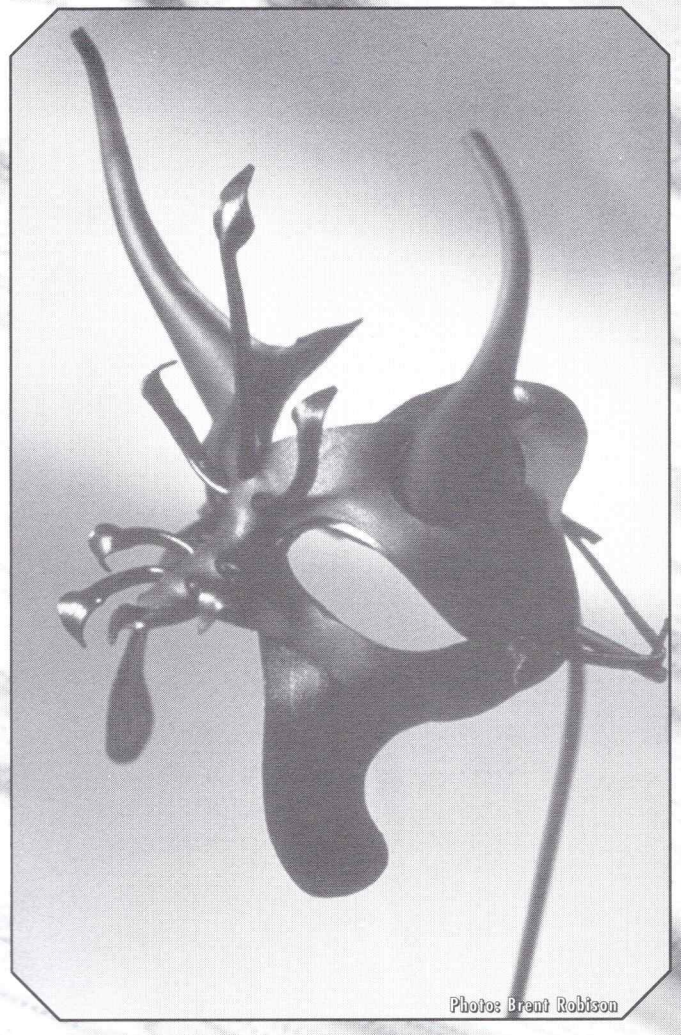
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Photo: Brent Robison

# Wendy Klein

## Art you can wear...

*"I see the human face as an unrelenting magician, playing tricks on everyone it meets. But when the face is masked, the body's language is allowed to take over. In this way, the costume mask acts to circumvent the psychological masks worn everyday, and by doing so, allows a more candid expression of one's character. My work taps a vein of personal mythic symbology that is not only related to the richness and romance of ancient legends, but also points toward the spiritual–the "archetypes of the collective unconscious"–as the most trustworthy source of identity. But to speak of my reasons for creating masks now as relating solely to their psychological implications would be inaccurate. I create masks because I have to, because as Virginia Woolf once said, 'Odd how the creative power at once brings the whole universe to order.'"*

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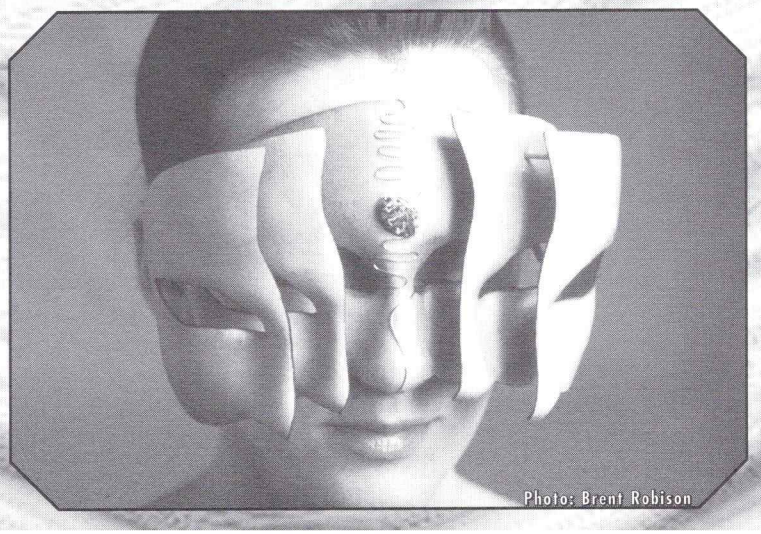
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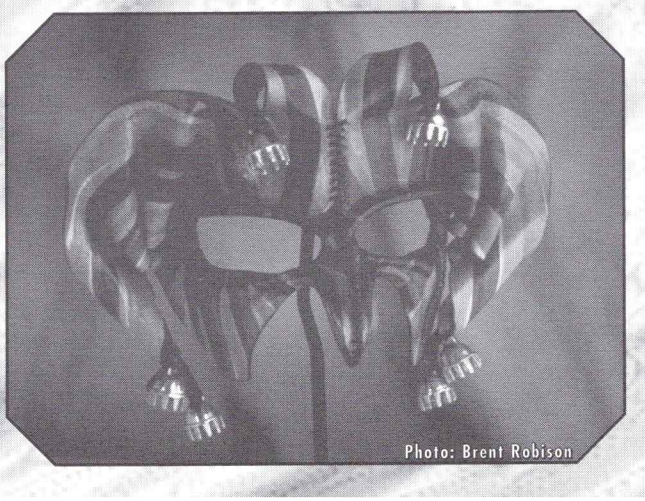
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# Louis Small,Jr.

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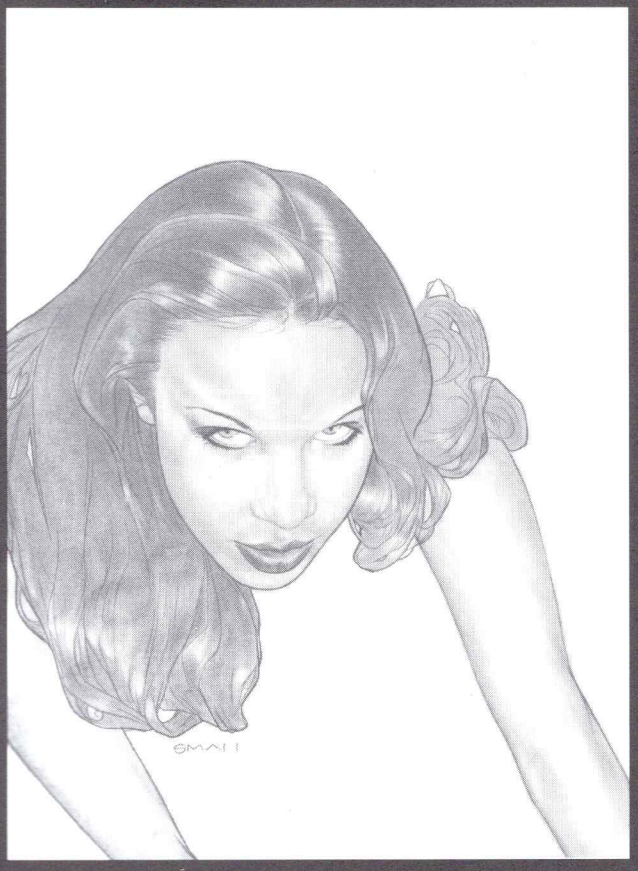

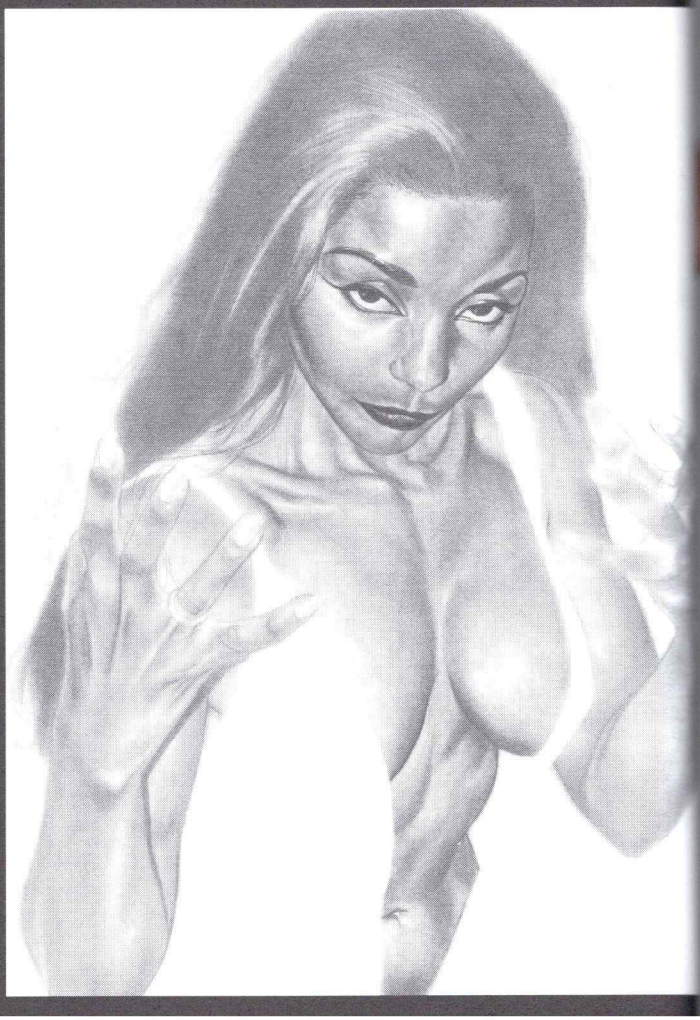

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# David Quinn

## Papa's Got a Brand New Bag

by Carnell

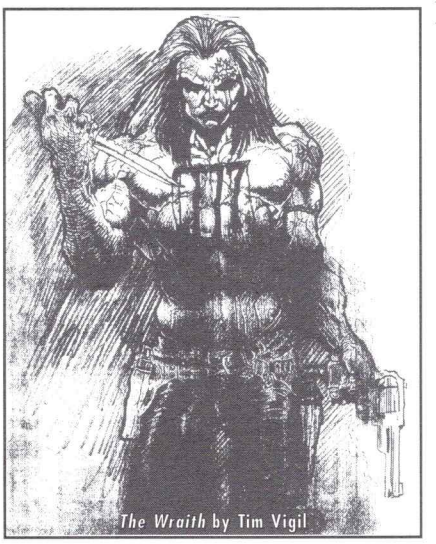
Comics writers are the unsung heroes of the industry. It is they who build the framework in which the artists hang their pictures. It is they who construct the intricate detail that, so often, gets attributed to the artists. And, it is they who are the first to get blamed if a series does not sell well. It is a thankless job however, in some, the need to tell stories is strong. It's not something they choose to do. It is something that they must do. They are driven to spin tales of fantasy and horror; conjure the yarns that go into our collective subconscious. They are the dream makers.

One such writer is David Quinn, whose work I was first introduced to in his collaboration with artist Tim Vigil, *Faust.* This violent tale of vengeance won and salvation lost paved the way for him to write such projects as London Night's *Razor,* Harris' *Vampirella,* and the promised *777: The Wraith.* His work has been called excessive by some, while others herald it as brilliant. This is a man who writes because he has to…and because he is good at it.

*As a writer, how important is a good education to being proficient in your craft?*

I think it's very important. I read a lot of comics by people who are what I would call "self-educated" writers. They have a knack for drawing or imagining stories and they know some words. I don't mean to slam "self-education," for anything I've ever accomplished in song-writing or cooking, just to name two examples that give me pleasure, has been self-taught. But sometimes self-education leaves us huge gaps. If I played you my music, or fed you dinner, you'd enjoy it. You wouldn't die unless I meant you to. But you wouldn't say you were in the presence of a highly evolved creator of food or tunes. It's the same with the writing component in the comics I'm talking about.

As much as the spirit of the story can come across and the emotional truth of it can come across, sometimes you wish the technique, particularly the craft of writing, was better. I'm always making stretch-goals for my own technique. With *Faust,* it was developing a new kind of interior voice, a cinematic feel and, of course, unleashing my primal thoughts and feelings in a context that wasn't just a primal scream. That would have been murder, I suppose. These days, with *Razor,* it's telling the same kind of primal story, but in a simpler, more concise, less impenetrable, less cinematic style.



*The Wraith* by Tim Vigil

Many comic books have a whole lot of visceral thrills, a lot of page-turning ideas, but I just wish the technique was better. I know I'm starting to sound like some kind of stuck-in-yesterday curmudgeon, but it irks me when repeating lines from the movies over plots regurgitated from the comics passes as writing. That's fine I suppose if you are intentionally doing pastiche or homage, but in the last ten years, ninety percent of comics seems to be homage. Thinking about my answer to your question, I'm struck by my humility and my utter arrogance. Maybe that contradiction is what makes me write instead of going to work for a bank.

*Do you think that some of those writers know, as you say the visceral thrill, is an easier grab?*

I guess so. It's something I deal with all the time. What brought me to writing, in the first place, was theater. And so, obviously, my imagination is very visual. I want people to be excited. I mean, I crave readers needing the next issue; they want to turn the page and keep reading. I'm a patient reader, and I'm relatively well-read, but even I find myself being impatient with stuff that takes a while to get going, as they say.

At the same time, the kind of horror/dark fantasy/adventure/primal drama/whatever-you-want-to-call-it, this dark stuff that we all deal in is really the perfect place, in a modern, fairly anti-intellectual and anti-religious society to deal with metaphysics. Now, that may sound pretentious, but that doesn't mean it isn't true. And comics are pretty cutting edge. *Dark Knight Returns, Deadworld, Swamp Thing, Watchmen, Faust,* and *The Crow* were all children of the eighties, but they nudged their niches of our culture toward the Millennium Thinking that's all the rage right now, you know, dystopia, invisible conspiracies, angels, demons, dark, dark, dark.

In fact, like our culture of homage and recycling, I'd say this feeling has taken over to the extent that most of us take it for granted. Fish don't know they are wet.

Anyway, comics still speak to this. All of the invisible stuff, and the stuff that is the roots of our mythology, comics is the easiest place to deal with the unmentionables for people.

*You were talking about technique, someone like Stephen King is immensely popular in the horror field, but someone like Thomas Ligotti has yet to find his real market. Do you think it's because with King that visceral grab or, a term I love, the primal drama, is such a gut punch as opposed to the surgicality of Ligotti's writing?*

Yeah...maybe. I mean I know casual readers may be slower to pick up Harlan Ellison, Clive Barker, or Joyce Carol Oates, who write in the same territory. Or David Quinn, he's doing his part here and there. But even King is only a tiny percent of what is read, though. It's scary to think how many more readers he has; it is many multiples of our readership, but he might have is name on only one percent of books bought, I don't know. I just thought of something else that's even scarier how irrelevant books are in post-literate America. I think when I'm an old man, should I stay ornery enough to live so long, we'll have developed a very interesting post-literate language of iconic pictures, numbers, and words. The word component won't have anything to do with what we called Standard Written English when I was teaching writing at Brooklyn College. Look at the internet, plenty of words, very little writing.

*I applaud your campaign to promote the idea of educators using comics as literature. Why do you think that comics don't get the respect they deserve?*

Because ninety percent are industrial waste product deserving no respect? So many of them are exactly the stereotype you think of when you think of an episode of a gang-produced soap opera or an *X Men* comic where every single panel has a foot note relating you to some other comic book where you have to jump on a hyper-link without a Web connecting them and you have to read twelve titles a month just to get a story that is barely creeping along. Comics have often lived up to that bad stereotype. Not always. I'm sitting in a crowded, messy studio filled with piles of comics that I read for pleasure, or that I read for research (like *Vampirella,* because I contribute to her pantheon), or some titles, like *Gen 13* or *Spawn,* that I might read to understand why the spirit of our time made them popular. Something I read as a pure guilty pleasure is *The Simpsons'* comic. Then there's stuff in here, too, I even reread that. I know that of comics are not all personal and vivid, like *Bullets* or the very best of *Faust* or *Cerebus,* where someone's personal vision coming across in a way its' own. Neither is most of television. So they're dust kicked up in their faces. Sometimes they do it and, on the other hand, comic books are just wonderful, direct media, very interactive.

When you started talking about comics getting respect, I remember, and everyone's got a story like this, of the time my comic was taken away from

Art by Leonard Kirk

during fifth grade or whenever it was. At least reading, I think as a teacher now. I wasn't twisting someone's arm while I shoved his face into the sizzling radiator or out smoking pot or all the other things the other little fifth graders were doing around the derelict school I went to. I was reading, but reading, I think it was probably *Dr. Strange,* awful, terrible, mind-raping Marvel comic. Get behind me, Stan Lee.

*In a society and a time when it is a major coup to get a kid to pick up a book, if I can't get him to put down Melville, I'm going to be ecstatic that he's picking up, well, perhaps I wouldn't be ecstatic if he were merely looking at the pseudo-porn in* Gen 13, *but... [laughs]*

Maybe if the hormones were starting to work and I moved on to pre-*Playboy.*

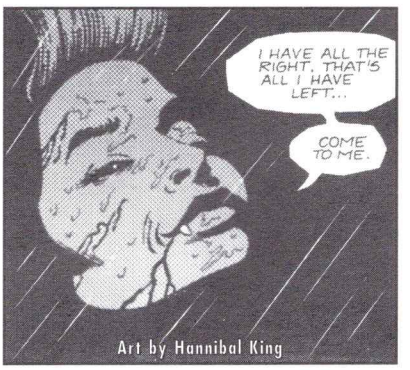
I would have loved to have read *Faust* in fifth grade. Would have blown my mind, and ripped me open. After certain repressions it took another decade or so to scream through. Wait till I have kids and read this back to me, I'll probably crash. Anyway, I think it's hard enough to get kids, whether inner-city or shopping-mall suburban, to even care enough to crack a book. To have a major figure in their life, like a teacher, tell them, "Oh, no...that book is bad."

*Does it ever get you that for a long time artists get the bulk of the adoration and writers are given second billing. It's the artists who have the long lines at conventions and...*

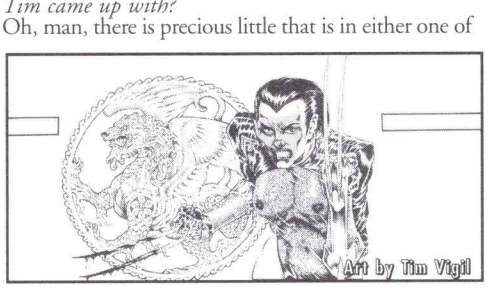
Yeah, I can hear it coming. I've seen writers almost lose their shit over this. I've seen writers come with an idea for a story, enroll an artist, go to convention and have the artist fawned over. The poor writer I knew thought her artist was the best thing that ever happened to her until they were in public together, then she wanted to throw the artist under a subway train.

Poor, poor writer monkeys, you must have the courage of your own convictions and not self-implode when your audience, who comes to see you because they like your book, meets you and asks, "Oh, who are you, Dude? You help carry the pencils?" That's not a direct quote from one of the *Faust* tours. Tim Vigil and I have always traveled a whole lot. He had a following before, from his exciting black & white comic work *(Grips)* and once-upon-a-time, I was a playwright who came in from the cold, no one knew. "Are you helping him?" Yeah, I'm helping him get over it. And when I started to be noticed for

work outside *Faust,* and even outside comics, he got over it, too. Vigil respects my diversity, always has, a lot more than some folks in the offices of publishers where I've heard they call me "Mr. Spooky."
Of course it helps that I also write and perform my own songs, write and direct plays, write fiction. My invisibility changes from neighborhood to neighborhood, which is good for helping me study my own insecurity. Because you use yourself to make your work real, but you have to lose yourself, too, or you work will be precious, narcissistic, dishonest, you know, pure bullshit.
Nobody notices the writer if it's going well. On the other hand, if it's a dog then they say, "There's no fucking story! Who wrote that thing?" So, if the writer's doing his job, he's almost invisible. Did I answer your question? It's a visual medium, of course the artist is God. But real readers know that without a writer, we wouldn't be reading. Not everyone can draw. Although everyone does know how to say and write down words.
*And some people do it better than others...*
Well, yeah. There's different degrees of writing down the words. One more anecdote. A famous spokes model, once a bad girl, now a good girl, who asked me, "So if the artist does the pictures and the letterer puts down the words, your job is kind of a no-brainer, isn't it?"
I have a pretty big mouth, so people tend to find out about me eventually. And I collaborate on a broader platform now. I'm doing more with film these days. There's work to do on ongoing *Faust, Nightvision,* and *This Year's Girl* projects, there's my first indy feature going before the cameras this spring (it's a vampire thing I can't tell you much about yet, but we'll get into it later), and I just wrote the treatment for Everette Hartsoe's *Tommi Gunn* production. For a few years of establishing myself as a full-time professional, though, it was nothing but comics and short fiction. I was really kind of missing the interaction with people besides my illustrators.
*You brought up* Faust *so I want to talk about that for a little bit. Was working on that title a good experience? It brought you a certain amount of attention from the marketplace, but other than that, was it a good thing, a happy time?*
Uhhhhh, I think it's ok to be infamous. It doesn't hurt to be infamous. It hurt me a few times because editors and creators in certain areas, including some of the so-called "adult" areas of mainstream comics, still get the heebee-geebees around me. I did this *Faust,* which is *The Satanic Verses* of politically correct comics. Now, no one's carried out any death threats or anything, but *Faust* is very dense in story, art, and theme. When it comes right down to it, people get cut open and what's inside us, that we don't want to look at, comes out all over the place. As I've written more broadly throughout the industry, I've heard from people that I'm not as awful as they thought I would be. Even artistic people can't escape the narcissistic point of view that if you write about the unmentionable, you are condoning it, or you are it. There are little professional branches of the mainstream that are supposedly adult, but the unspoken law is "Don't be too adult." Shun them.
*They are happy with* Cherry Tart *but you get a little too real...*
I think I know what you mean. If you thrust into sex you can't explore the violent side of our feelings there. If you make a show of violence, make it pretty and don't offend. And you damn well better not do it in a serious fashion, make it a joke or a *Barb Wire* cliché. David Cronenberg has the same problem, god bless him. See *Crash* when you can. Support art that breaks these infantile borders.
I feel I learned how to write comics on *Faust.* I developed a voice I didn't know I had. *Faust* is written filmically, if that's a word. We took a conscious, almost Brechtian strategy: a reader was going to have to engage with the reading, or he or she would miss out. None of the captions really take you by the hand and tell you what you're about to see. It's not written like a Marvel comic, where you see a picture of a gun, a caption telling you it's a gun, then you read a speech balloon that says, "Look out, he's got a-" then you read a sound effect, "bKOOOM!"
Was, and is, working on *Faust* a good experience? Well, I knew I wasn't going to please everyone. Perhaps Vigil and I needed to shove a few people away, so we could be even more misanthropic. Seriously, though, I wouldn't have met a long line of interesting people if not for *Faust.* For example, just to pick someone you'll know, I met Clive Barker and said, "I'm a fan." And he said, "Oh, *Faust!* Yes, I've mentioned reading that in interviews! Don't tell me what's going to happen, I want to read it." And I fucking respect Clive. So, you meet all sorts of people. Tim and I still work together and we're working on other things to follow *Faust.* How does it fit in with my more mainstream (Mainstream, me? That's not what they say in the well-insulated offices in NYC!) work? I guess



it's like if you had this wonderful garage band in rock and roll and you felt that was your most primal musical experience ever, it wouldn't matter if you also went and played with some other big orchestra on a larger stage. You would always still have it in your heart–this niche thing, this hardcore explosive thing that you'd done, still in your heart.
*How much did you have to do with the direction* Faust *ultimately took? I mean, it began as a maniacal Wolverine type of character and then it took this right hand turn into the sexuality and mysticism. Was that entirely your plan or was that something you and Tim came up with?*
Oh, man, there is precious little that is in either one of




our "plans" like a private agenda. We go back and forth so much, commenting on each other's process. It's symbiosis, a back-and-forth. Here's the history, to answer your question. Tim's seminal *Grips* was very thin in terms of character, but very visceral and even rough. Rough and ready and quick. It rode along with the black and white boom when everybody was looking for the next *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (the mock Turtle boom) and buying every single black & white they could get their hands on. We pursued another book to follow it; that was really kind of an *Excalibur* story. It was about a hero who had a magic sword, and it was loaded with *Star Wars* and comic book trappings, such as we were thinking about in the eighties, and a little bit of the dark side, but it was mostly this bright, gleaming guy with a sword. As I went on and wrote more and more of it for Tim (it was his character) I was pushing all of that Joseph Campbell influenced, Arthurian Jesus-with-broadsword type stuff. People weren't loving it as much as they'd loved a guy cutting people up. I think you mentioned Wolverine, they were into that. So, we said, "Well, we have to do that. We've got to go back and do that or we're going to reach a dead end with this thing. Besides, [laughs] this *Omega* (also called *Omen*) is getting epic: David is writing a lot of crowd scenes and they're hard to draw, so we're going to go back and do that fierce slashy thing again, only this time with soul and some smarts."
So we wandered around New York (this was 1987 and I was living in Brooklyn, teaching English and nursing my wounds from some limited success in the music business) and came up with different ideas and I put a lot of my influence of magic and a scratch-mix (as we used to call it back then) of a post-American, Miltonian translation of Hell, with all the demonic wars translated to modern psycho-violent terms, and all the hierarchies and the bureaucracies of Hell replaced with that of 80s New York.
Tim put a lot of visual ideas which came out of the comic book heroes, but were also influenced a lot by classical art which he'd looked at, not too mention New York, which was all around us. We were studying the architecture as we were going into the library. Just at that point, we were pushing each other to make it mean more. We wanted all of the blood and sex that we felt would make a modern tragedy, but we wanted to push each other to make it mean more…and we still do. We're working now on Acts 12 and 13.
*If this is the end of* Faust: Love of the Damned, *what's next for the Quinn/Vigil team?*
You know how you have these projects where you think, "Some day." We've had about three of them, so far, but this one we're particularly hot about because we think it is taking a leap frog over the Millennium fever that has been creeping up. I guess *Faust* certainly has been a part of that. I mean, if you look at the artwork at the end of the last century, a lot of it is the same kind of dark stuff; dark, ornate and complicated. It's the same with the writing. So, we've been part of that Millennium fever, but that's going to end and then we're going to need a new direction. The next thing we're trying to do is really looking in a new direction for the both of us. I can't tell you much about *777: The Wraith,* but I can tell you it isn't *Faust.* I can show you a picture or three. It's the next stretch for us as a team. Individually, we are also growing, sometimes in parallel, sometimes together.
*What is your involvement with the* Faust *film? Is that still a project that is being passed around?*
I wrote it, that's all. I'll rewrite it when we get a deal. Shopped around is a better word. We had a production in pre-production with Stuart Gordon directing...
*I had heard about that. I, in fact, saw a poster with Brinke Stevens, of all people on it, and groaned.*
Hey, Brinke's a wise and soulful woman. Oh, maybe you groaned because you thought she was playing that part. That was never anyone's intention. Actually, just for the sake of late night rambling, I'd rather use Brinke as the DJ character, the chorus of the doomed city character, Libra. Very cosmic, very street and the sexiest voice–except for maybe M–in the film. I don't think I ever told her this, though, or my co-creator, so it's just as much air as the movie right now. Anyway, people think we were actually filming and she was playing Claire, that's not true. Man, how literally we take things, eh? And Quinn does it with snakes and Cronenberg does it in auto wrecks. [Laughs] I think the poster we shot is great, though, especially since Tim and I weren't even there to put in our suggestions for "improvement." Talk to Brinke, she'll tell you the same thing. Then you'll get to hear the voice.
We had a whole package together: my script, Tim's designs, Stuart directing, we even had a special effects house for whatever puppets, sets, monsters, mutations, angels, and demons or whatever that we would have needed to go through. That project came dangerously close to getting funded. It was

pretty expensive. We knew we were going for the long shot. Tim and I were staying very directly involved. We were not simply selling to Mr. Producer the look and going away with our money. We were trying to sell to someone who would let us stay involved and that's not a very sexy gamble for the million-dollar investors to go into. Regardless of how well we know the story, and [even though] Tim and David have managed to tell a visual story before, in Los Angeles, when it comes down to the money people, we're not a great gamble-yet. So, what I've been trying to do lately is to get other film credits. Purely work-for-hire. I've completed a scripting job for a film that will shoot this year in Atlanta. The indy horror film I mentioned was based on the director's basic story, but people who read me will still hear me in there, I dramatized it. I'll come in the back door if I have to. As I think I said in the beginning, I've been able to go a lot of places and try a lot of things because I'm not afraid to admit that I have something to learn. *[Faust]* just won't be my first film. I've conceded that, and I'm sure Vigil has, too. Anyway, we have a plot for a film we'd like to write and direct together-the high-concept would have to be *Basic Instinct* meets *I Spit on Your Grave*. We can make it for a million. Where's Roger Corman when you need him?

*Do you think that* Faust *can get a literal treatment on film or do you think it would have to be seriously rewritten?*

Some of the Hollywood sleazeballs and clowns that have approached us since the Stuart Gordon production went belly-up have had hilarious suggestions, and always after soft-selling us the "respect for the creator's vision" pitch. It's worse than the characters in a Lou Reed song, you wanna just say, "Go set yourself on fire and improve California." Serious answer, though, if I were directing? I think it can do the same thing to your imagination. I can put you in a really desperate and dark place out of which it becomes urgent to search for integrity, courage, love and all of the stars that you see when you're down in the pits of Hell. So, I think it can be emotionally translated, but I would never shoot the same camera angles that the book shoots because you just don't need it. When things move you don't need to see every pubic hair, every shot of blood, you just don't. You could make an interesting visual nightmare ballet/war instead of Vigil's painstakingly huge closeups of genitalia, count every hair, or the inner music of exploding internal organs and things like that, but you don't really need it. When you feel that from a film, seeing it suggested clearly, you can feel it. Tim might not phrase that in the same words, but I know we both agree the film could have an "R" release. Hopefully shooting enough to do an unrated video release, if that is something that the market would bear. You might want to see one that is unrated and goes a little further than what we could show in the theater… I would love to see a whole house ripple and revolt, turned on, horrified, moved, puzzled and even cheering out loud when Jade and John and Balfour all come to the bloody crossroads and get fierce for the right reasons.

I want the biggest audience possible, otherwise I could have stayed doing theater for twenty people in the East Village. (Who probably sneer at me now, the sellout! Shit, I'm the poorest sellout I know.)

*You've worked for some of the bigger companies such as Marvel, Harris, Vertigo, Malibu, DC, and Disney (which still cracks me up).*

Disney is fun. I know some great people at Disney. I didn't believe they would ever talk to me, but they do. I'm more welcome at Disney than in some doorways at Verotik or Vertigo, even though I get fan mail asking me why I don't work with those lines more often!

*It seems that Vertigo is content to try to recapture whatever magic there was on* Sandman.

They're trying some new things. I know that a few editors up there have tried to work with me on books that are real different than the universe of the Golden Bough-inspired, mythology of elves and the like. *Preacher* is the happy exception, and I am talking to some editors there again in its wake. I sometimes have a touch of envy, though completely without malice, for Garth and Steve's gift for getting that published. My kind of story, but from my impression of the timid, pale, little editorial stance I saw in effect there a few years ago, before *Preacher* became a hit, well, let's just say they would have

never let me do it. At least I get to read it.

*I'm curious, now that you've worked both sides of the fence with the bigger companies and with some of the smaller press, which do you feel is a better environment to work in, the bigger, more "corporate" companies because they have more money behind them or*

*the smaller, more independent publishers because they allow you a little more freedom?*

God, my answer would change from month to month. With the exception of artist-of-the-week disease, my experience at Marvel was wonderful until the

business floor of Marvel effectively killed the co
ny as a publishing concern. My editor was cons
looking over his shoulder to see when he was go
get fired. Every other editor that I could have w
with was, too. I had some definite goals in
working with *Dr. Strange* and a few other gues
I did for Marvel and Malibu, when Malibu was
engulfed and strip-mined by the company. I sa
piece and got through whatever I had to learn
time. I was getting divorced at the time, too so
really processing a whole lot of shit. I was shie
bit from the environment because I didn't care,
n't want to go write *X Men.* I didn't want to go
some book that tied in with sixteen other books
to say my piece towards the end, I did two
(*Exiles #6: The Birthday Party* and *Carnage #1*
*Wonderful Life*) which were, in effect, allegories
death of the old Mama Marvel and the death o
tain dream factory that a lot of kids my age gr
with in the seventies and the eighties.

The stories were two of my best Marvel stories
(yeah, I have things to do with Dr. Strange if I
part of his next renaissance) and they also spoke
feeling I had in 1994 and 1995 when the edi
Marvel stopped using the pronoun "we" for
and began referring to their own company as
Not Stan, though. "No, Dangerous Dave, the
yet to come!" Well, wouldn't that be nice. I di
was appropriate, at the time, and then I looked
no regrets. To answer your question, I feel like a
sider wherever I go. I still think *Taxi Driver* is a
perfectly appropriate reaction to life.

Still have a few things that I've offered them, th
still talented editors I'd work with, but, for the
part, the company's just about as irrelevant to
a creator, as they are to most readers as an ent
er. Even comics retailers are starting to see th
company are going to be more interested
Marvel restaurant and the Marvel films tha
Marvel comics, and maybe that is good bu
somewhere. The positive thing to look at is th
that I can still do this micro-publishing thing
Faust, maybe only once a year or every other ye
I can. And I'm fortunate. People like Ev
Hartsoe and Brian Pulido keep calling me u
saying, "What do you want to do with my c
ters?" Nothing can stop me as long as there are
and distributors and we sell it to stores ou
when we have to. If they can't find the books,
been known to drive them right up to the pla
*I'm with you on that one...*

Your distribution must be similar. The first
*Noctem* I saw was in a Barnes & Noble, but I
it's hard to get through some of the barriers of
bution. Right now, I'm working with a lot of
lishers who are what I would call the small and
ing ones. The ones who are just saying, "Fuck it
still going to do comics" and that means peop
Chaos, Avatar, London Night, Harris, Sirius, an
that. Who knows? I may become more involved
DC. I've done a few books for them and the p
of getting a book accepted over there is very
They have a great attitude. "We're number 2...
er. We're not going away." I read DC books.

*It was interesting, in* Wizard *they just did an*
*on how DC puts more of an investment in their*
*ers and the want to nurture them more as oppo*
*someone like Marvel who is just a gristmill.*

That's what I was getting at–not that either one
knows the inner workings right now. I do hear
stories about good old Grandma DC's gristmi
Remember, there was a mailing sent out last year
Paul Levitz, kind of a form letter, inviting peop
me who used to contribute to DC and no longe
mit ideas and concepts, welcoming us back,
speak. But I've had projects lying in develop
for a year since. But look at the writers. A lot o
writers at DC are full time writers, not editors th
fired and haven't gotten a real job yet.

*Would you have any desire to take the grittin*
Faust *and the darker aspects of some of your*
*writing and direct it towards crime fiction serie*
I'm doing one, called *Huge,* actually, for Acc
It's a crime comedy which I don't think e
when I first wrote it. I wrote it as a stage pla
I did that version of it off-off-Broadway.
while, it was going to be a DC book, and tha
of DC, Piranha Press, shot itself and beca

Paradox. Now, I've bought back the rights and I'm going to do it for Acclaim. In the meantime, over the ten years it's been sitting around, Quentin Tarantino has come (and gone?) Thank you, Quentin. There is a crime comedy genre now. If you watch one of his movies, it's kind of like reading Frank Miller's *Sin City.* You know what the story is going to be because it is predictable, a pastiche of the pulps, but that's not the issue. The joy is in the strange little things that come along along the way. Character comedy is alive again! The way it's told becomes the interesting thing. Somebody who is more academic than me might have a whole lot of footnotes on how that is a post-modern thing. I don't know.

*Huge* is about two sisters who try to turn what they love into a business. They turn their art into a business. One sister is a very Gothic, very street. She can't perform her art unless she really feels it. The other is at the top of her profession and makes underground television appearances and appears on all of the charts of that profession.

Very quickly, within twenty pages, you realize that, although they seem like they are talking about singing, dancing, or acting, their art is killing. One is a street killer and one is a highly paid assassin. They go through a role reversal because they both have that moment where they think, "Man, is that all there is to life? I'm never going to be happy. My sister has it easier." It's a hard thing to go through a role reversal when you are involved with all of this business, and of course, the business is the underworld, entanglements. Screwball murder comedy. So may I suggest your readers support Acclaim's crime line?

*I'd like to ask you really quickly about a number of comics projects that I've heard that you are either working on or had involvement in. First,* Nightvision?

*Nightvision* just now developed a film treatment. We have a performer who is interested in co-producing. I did a one shot this year that came out from London Night because Everette had the balls to fund the project.

*Nightvision* has always been [something that] goes homeless, coming out from Rebel or Tundra or London Night, wherever it finds support. There's going to be more, actually. I wrote a four part story for Hannibal King to draw, if he can find the time this year. Blythe and the wives of Dracula. More fierce females and dysfunctional relationships.

*How about* Into Red?

*Into Red* has also attracted someone who wants me to develop a film treatment and, hopefully, more comics. I have a few short stories in mind, but I haven't even started writing them. The artist who co-created the look and the design of the character, she's gotten very busy, bless her.

David's Wedding Invitation • Art by Tim Vigil

*What about* Lead Rain?

That's something I developed with Kyle Hotz. It's a black tragedy, a gun story, a smoking spiritual western. We'd found a publisher and then he wimped out on us. Faith costs money these days. To be determined…

Ultimate Strike*?*

*Ultimate Strike* is being published by London Night. How about that for a change of pace, writing something that gets drawn and printed? The first issue is out. It's five issues and it is the lighter side of comic book violence and the whole psycho hero with breasts genre. It's practically absurd in the extremes of sexy glamour and sudden assault. It's crazy.

*What was it about* Razor *that made you want to get involved in that? She seems almost* Faust*-like.*

Yeah, at times I've looked at characters like Razor and Spawn as being Faust-Lite, treading on the same turf, but not grinding your face into it quite so hard, and not requiring you to pay so much attention. I went to it because it was available, because I was given carte blanche very graciously by the creator. He said, "I want your kind of stories and you are going to do ten issues, maybe more, but certainly no less." So, it wasn't a job that was going to be killed in the middle of my storyline. I took the challenge and just tried to make my kind of story for a slightly more protected, shall we say, audience. It's going well. It's pretty interesting. I'm trying to keep the stories very short, so you only have to read one book to know whether this is a book for you or not. That's a challenge everybody in comics should really try. Issue Four, just out as we speak, is a hardcore crime story called *Rent Party.* Nicole takes down a pimp. What makes it hard this series is that we've given her a new rule, similar to *Terminator 2,* no killing. That's hell for her right now, because her gritty world keeps on turning. That issue, or the first, would be perfect points for new readers hungry for a different take on the vigilante in the darkness to jump on. I'm being a little facetious in my hype-voice here, but that is what I'm going for. Told with complete character integrity, *Razor* would be a tragic work that would end in her death, brought about by her tragic flaw, in spite of her lofty aspirations. But this is an ongoing series, so we have to get into some weird shit.

*I wanted to ask you about your idea for on-line comic web sites? Do you think that this format is a good one for comics? Do you think it has a future?*

I've been pushing into it slowly. I have a couple of stories and I've read some studies on interactive storytelling as opposed to straight linear. I'm getting better at understanding how to flowchart out something like that. It's a lot of work. I have someone trying to sell the idea for me, again pretty slowly, through the Internet providers, the commercial, up front face services like CompuServe, not necessarily direct Internet providers. I'm just trying to sell that content and it's just a bear to make them understand what it is I am dreaming here and getting them to pay for it.

I think, at this point in its development, the Internet is so nebulous to companies. They want to know how are they going to make money off of this, but it isn't like applied science, it's a slow cultural shift. But people are going to have to, very quickly, start getting content that is meaningful. Think of all the times you've gotten on the Web and it was a sheer waste of time. That's not fun forever. Monty Python's CD ROM is called *Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time* isn't it? And that's what most of the Internet is. You wait and wait until you see you waited for something you didn't need.

Art by Tim Vigil

*Well, I always say, "Just because you bought a modem, it doesn't give you the right to express an opinion or have a web site."*

[laughs] Oh…I think that violates some law…

When I started trying to get artists to be willing to draw these things, I told them it's paperless. It's something that we haven't tried before. It's an incredible potential audience. Stop going for the shrinking ones. The ones who will spend three dollars for a mindless comic they'll read in five minutes, one by one, they're discovering girls and guitars, kiddo.

*What gets me is that, even though with all of those considerations, the people who have access to the Internet is still relatively small, but that's changing every day with people like AOL.*

I want to play with it. I feel like you do, too. What I'm doing is trying to structure my ideas, but I'm not getting very far very fast. The comic book is still more interactive. Cheaper, more portable technology, even with those damn shiny covers.

*I just think cyber-space, in general, is this wide open vista that is so big that we still can't get our fingers on it in order to define it. I think it's like the discovery of the old West where no rules apply so people are getting away with amazing things.*

Well, you and I weren't around when TV started, but I should ask my Dad because he probably remembers a little bit more when TV first became in everybody's home. I think it would probably be more like that. TV was going to save the world, too.

*And look what it became…*Melrose Place. *Finally, other than the things we've already talked about, what direction do you see your life and career going? Are you firmly focused in film or do you want to continue to have your fingers in a lot of different pots?*

I guess I'm going to have to keep staying pretty diverse because I could never quit comics, even though I hear that it is becoming a very challenging business. There are writers who I read as a kid telling me, "I've never seen it worse as a creative person." There is a sobriety there. I don't necessarily like teaching full time or doing technical writing for banks or the auto industry, those are lucrative alternatives but not so sexy as far as my ideas. I'm going to keep in comics, but I've been always stretching as far as what I write. It's been a little while since I've done a new play, and I try to stretch in that direction and now I am actively working in film because I think that's the thing that is going to keep me and my family alive and give me a lot of time to write the other things I want. I have novels that I have never been able to finish because I always have to go back to doing something I'm getting paid for. That's not the only reason you write, you know that, it's never just that, but I do own a home and that's an expression in itself, what with my interests in herbs, gardening, cooking, art, family, and everything that makes my home more than just a shelter.

I'm setting a new challenge for myself to finish a novel, something with that scope. I've never been brave enough every day to get one of the fragmented pieces of long fiction finished. So I added an extra day to my schedule, an hour each day, where I begin to train the sustained prose muscles that are lying in between the dialogue and plot muscles, seriously. The first couple of warm-ups were "Forever October," a short story that will appear in the next *Sons of Darkness* anthology from Michael Rowe and Thom Roche, and an essay on how I approach comics, "Breaking the Borders," in *Writing Horror,* from Writer's Digest books. Look me up in six months and we'll see how the prose muscles are working.

KA-BOOM
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4
3
2

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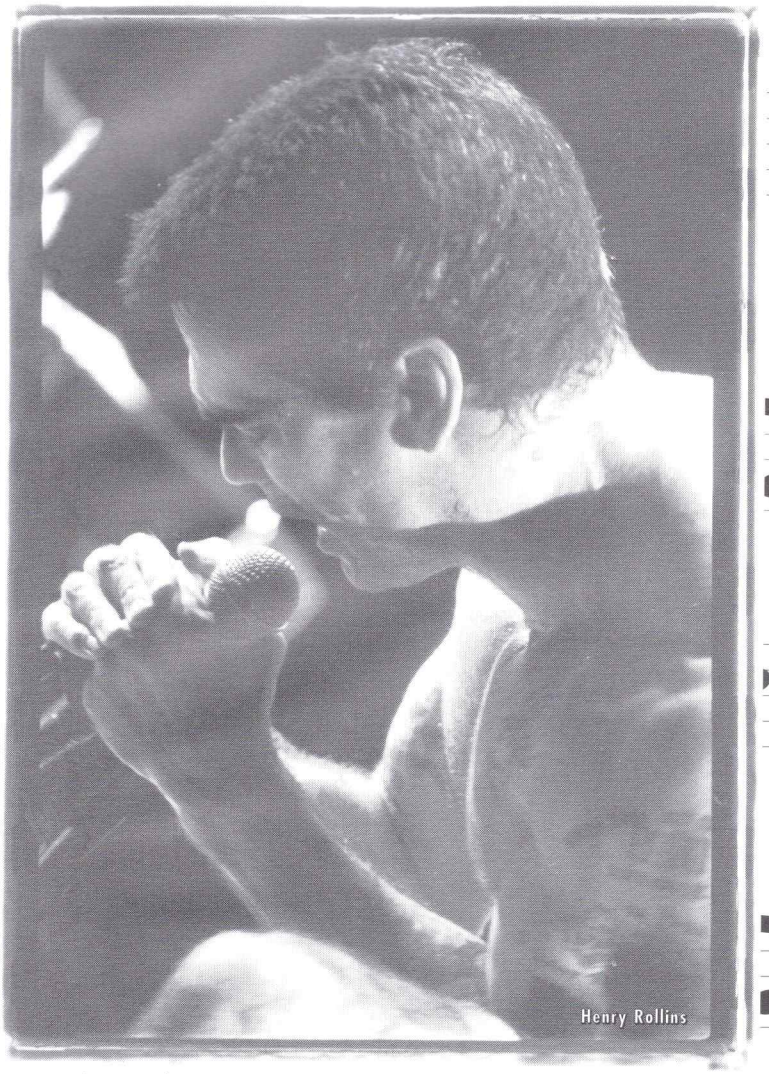
# Anthony Pidgeon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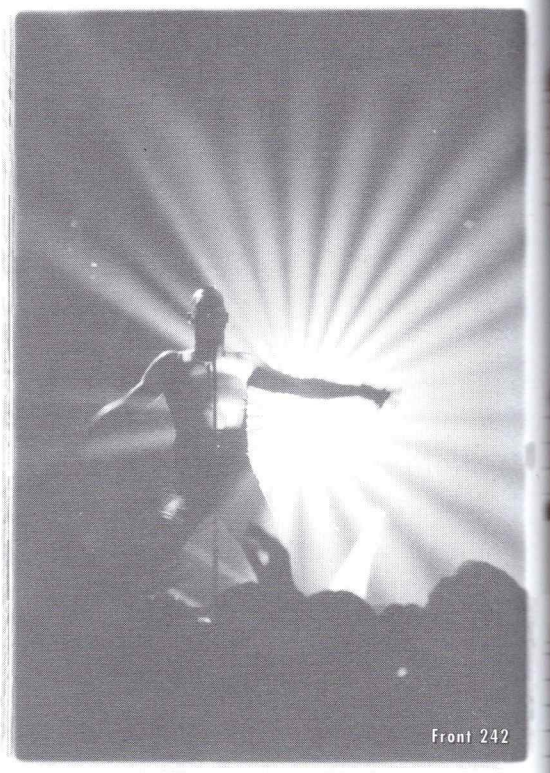
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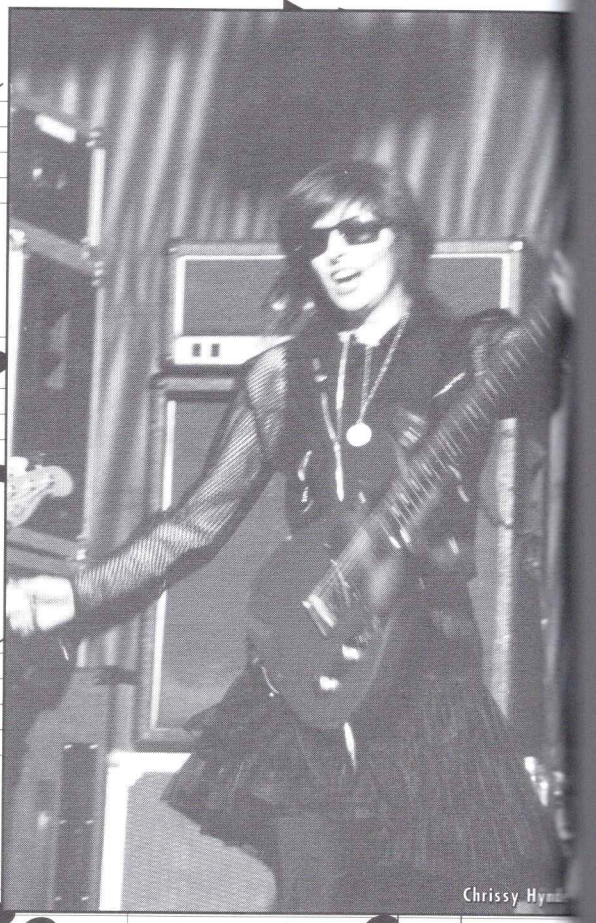
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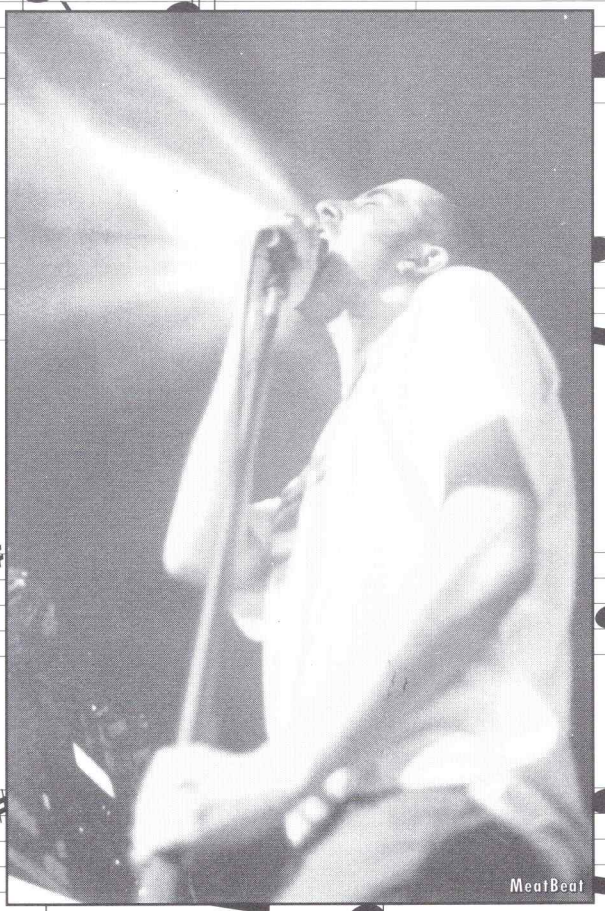

MeatBeat

Rosetta Stone

Faith and the Muse

Tel Basta

To contact the artist:
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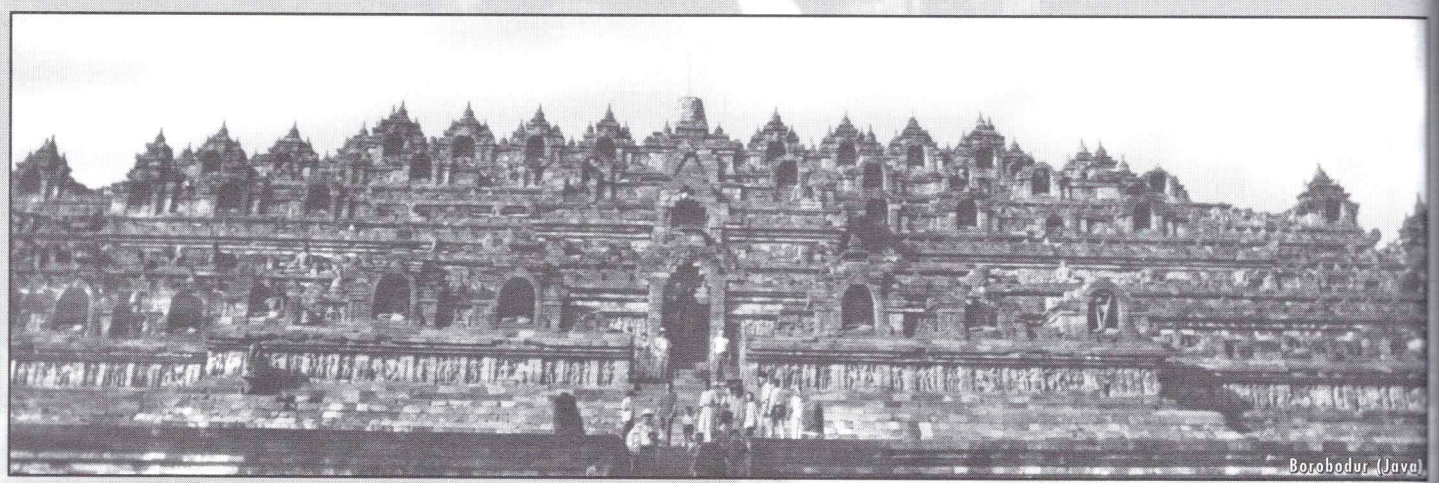
# Loren Nerell

Borobodur Carving (Java)

Borobudor is located about 40km from Jogjakarta in the central most part of Java. It is the ruined site of a major Buddhist monument. Built over 1,100 years ago by a wealthy king of the Sailendra dynasty, the great shrine stands, constructed of dark-gray volcanic stone that possesses no interior spaces. The shrine rests on a square base measuring 121m on each side and consist of eight diminishing tiers of terraces connected by stairways. A huge Stupa, or bell shaped dome, rises over 30m from the uppermost terrace. Drifting over this placid setting is the music of the gamelan, an ensemble ranging from a few players to several dozen. The gamelan, with the exception of a few string and woodwind instruments, is a percussion group featuring xylophones, metallophones (tuned metal bars) and gongs. The various instruments are not interchangeable, for each orchestra has its own tuning. The gamelan can be coupled with the human voice and used to accompany dance and theater. Few people in the West are purveyors of this rare style of music which is said to have influenced the work of Claude DeBussy. One of the few is Side Effects recording artist Loren Nerell whose latest release, *Lillin Dewa*, is an amazing listening experience.

*Your bio states that Tangerine Dream's album Rubycon was a big influence on you.*
Yeah, my initial interest in electronic music came from that.
*What was it about that album that grabbed your attention and refocused you as to what you wanted to do in music?*
I was actually really young when I heard that, I was fourteen or so. I heard it when it first came out. I'd never heard anything like that at the time. It was just so different than what I was normally used to hearing which at the time, was mostly pop music and some classical stuff. It took me a while to digest it, but once I got into it, I realized that this was something interesting that I wanted to pursue more.
*Growing up, were you always doing music? Was that a thing your parents wanted you to do? I mean was it music lessons and that whole thing?*
I took music lessons. It was more my idea. My parents never forced me into it. I started off on trumpet, then switched to tuba of all things, took piano lessons and studied some other instruments.
*Throughout your history, you seem to have consistently backed up your natural ability in music with a lot of academic education. Do you think that it is an important thing to get a solid educational background in music as opposed to just getting out there and learning some "chops?"*
I think an education is an important thing but it doesn't have to be scholastic and it doesn't have to be musical, either. I think it depends on what one wants to do. If someone is interested in western classical music, then a scholastic education is probably the best, because that's what most institutions are geared towards. But if someone wants to do something like what I am doing, then where does one go? To me it just seemed that scholarship was a natural course for me to follow and it was more of a personal goal than anything. In the end I think someone just has to follow what they feel is best for themselves.
*I notice that you have a BS in Anthropology and Geography. How does that dove-tail into the music?*
Well, that came about through a couple of things. The first, when I was really young, my folks and I spent two whole summers in Mexico traveling around visiting all the pyramids and the ancient sites built by the Mayans and Aztecs. That piqued my interest in anthropology a bit at a very young age. I got into it musically, later on when I was in college I got introduced to gamelan music, so that got me interested in going back and pursuing that end. For me, I felt the best place for me to learn about other cultures music was by studying anthropology and ethnomusicology, both of which helped me not just by showing me musically what is possible, but by showing me how other cultures view music.
*You are heading in a distinct direction where there are a lot of gamelan influences. Why particularly that style of music?*
Actually, it's something that I've been pursuing for a number of years. Even on my first album there's a bit of gamelan influence on it. I don't know if you've recognized that or not. So, that's something I've really been interested in pursuing. My introduction to gamelan music had a very similar reaction on me as the *Rubycon* album did years earlier. They both just seemed to resonate something similar inside of me. Because of that I wanted to try and incorporate the two together. I found the gamelan stuff to be a natural counter-point to go along with the electronics stuff.
*Do you feel that since a lot of the electronics is [cut] that–electronic and therefore somewhat cold–does [the] ethnomusicality ground it and bring it back into the human?*
I think so. See, electronics don't have to be cold. I mean, they can definitely have a life of their own and they can be very organic and acoustic if treated properly. Having a little of the acoustic element helps, in the long run.
*You've written for film, theater, dance and interactive media. What can you tell me about these projects?*
Actually, I haven't done that much. I've done a bit of each of those. The most recent thing I did was the background music for a CD-ROM magazine called *Launch*. They've been using my music for about the last six months now. The one film I did was a student film called *Inside the Aquarium* that was a graduate student's master thesis film. It was a short animated project, kind of an experimental thing.
*Is that something you'd want to do more of?*
Yeah, I wouldn't mind doing more of that. It was an interesting experience. I enjoyed it. I don't think I would want it to be my main focus.
*You don't want to be Jerry Goldsmith...*
Yeah, exactly. [laughs] I know people who do that for a living and it just seems that the film business takes them over, creatively, and once they get into it they lose their edge.
*It becomes "not music for music's sake, but music to fit when the shark swims by."*
It's such a competitive business and because of that you don't have the final say. I don't think it can really be a very creative outlet because the director ultimately has the final say and that's just a small aspect of the whole picture.
*I see a lot of situations where someone will pour their heart out into an hour or so of music and, if the film isn't working right, the first thing that gets cut is the score. So, the theater and dance stuff, was that mostly in college as well?*
Yeah, the last thing I did was about two years ago


Borobodur (Java)

at UCLA. It was an experimental thing called *Kijang Raja*. The woman who directed the play took an old Italian Comedie D'Arte, a comedy play called *The Stag King*. She took the elements

Pram Priest (Java)

of it looked at it, and thought, "Well, this would be interesting to throw it into an Indonesian or South East Asian theater using their techniques of dance, movement and music." She took all of her students and dressed them up and taught them to move certain ways such as they do in the theater there and we used the gamelan as the music to accompany it. I was the music director for that.

*Walking away from those projects, what lessons did you learn from them that have helped you subsequently in the music that you are making now?*

At the time, I was working on my album, so it had a direct influence. Actually, the third piece on the album came out of that. It was a distilled version of what I was doing. Aside from that it was a growth experience. I learned a lot about how to deal with a lot of people. If I ever do something like that again, one thing I felt that I needed more of was rehearsal time with the group. We got really short shifted on that because the whole emphasis was on the theater production part.

*You performed all of this stuff live or was it all on tape?*

It was all live, we did four performances.

*So, that's even more plates spinning.*

Yeah, we had about a dozen people who were performing the music. It was all just acoustics. I didn't use any electronics on this. I mainly used the gamelan. I wrote some music for the gamelan and then I took some other bits that I had learned of different compositions from Bali and Java and threw them in. It was an interesting experience. There was some talk about taking it to some theater festival in Scotland, but that hasn't happened yet.

*You performed with the Kronos Quartet. How was that?*

That was another interesting experience. Again, that was at UCLA. They spent a week in residence in the Ethnomusicology Department. Basically, their residency culminated with a concert at the end of the week with them using various ensembles that perform at UCLA. They performed with the Near East Ensemble, African Ensemble, some Chinese musicians and we did a piece with them on the gamelan.

*What can you tell me about your thesis on lelambatan?*

That's not a very well known term outside of Bali, but it's the most well known music in Bali. Every village uses this music to some extent. It's the ceremonial music for their temple ceremonies. Every village has at least one major temple, and every temple has to have at least one gamelan to accompany their ceremonies, many have more, and lelambatan is the music they perform. It's basically your traditional gamelan ensemble, but they have an instrument called a "trompong" which is like a solo, virtuosic instrument. Each piece lasts about twenty to thirty minutes long with this one person playing the whole solo with the gamelan accompanying him. They'll play maybe six, eight, ten pieces during a ceremony of this style. The music is not meant for the people who attend these ceremonies, but for the god's enjoyment.

*I'm noticing a lot of interest in ambient music in general and ethno-ambient in particular. Do you think this is an interest of the day and a passing phase or do you think that it means that the future is looking bright for that sub-genre?*

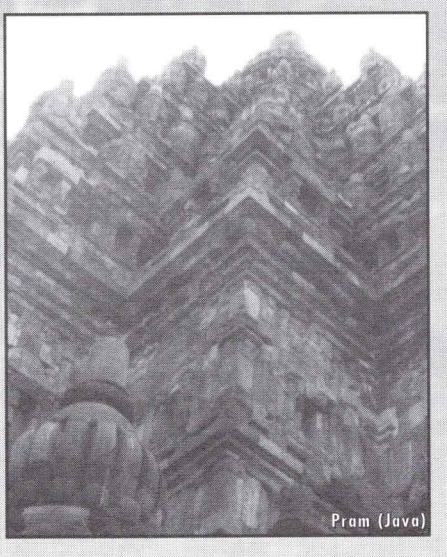
I think it's probably both, actually. There are certain people who just see it as a new flavor to try, but I also think there is also a lot of people who are seriously interested in it and are willing to pursue this more and want to hear more of this stuff.

*At times, there is a dark-ish tone to some of your music, yet it still gives off this great feeling of peace, warmth and contentment. Which do you feel is closer to the initial vision that you have when you are writing it?*

Maybe the question is just a balance, you know? Usually when I start a piece it comes from an idea and may just be a fragment which I expand upon from there. I think the darker tones are just something I normally tend to gravitate towards. They tend to be the tricks I know. [laughs] The musical tricks I know. The ones you use a lot of. So, they are probably are just things that are always there, kind of the baggage I drag along with me, but in the end I'm just trying to find a balance between these two sides.

*Do you go into writing a piece with a distinct idea you want to get across or a mood you want to create or is it just noodling?*

Not so much noodling any more. It depends upon the piece. The first piece on the album, Irama, that was a purely musical idea. There is this style of gamelan in Java called "Sekatan." It's this old style that dates back about five hundred years. They only play it once a year, the week of Mohammed's birthday, and they play it all day every day during that week. When I was there last, I had the opportunity to spend two whole days recording one of the two groups that was playing this stuff. Because of that, I became really interested in this style. I wanted to do something like that, but do it in my own style. So, that's how that came about. The opposite of that would probably be the last piece on the album, "Borobudur 4 AM," that came from some field recordings. Again, I did it in Java, at the Borobudur, which is the largest Buddhist Stupa in the world. I recorded that, actually at four AM, which is about the time that all of the Muslim mosques start their call to prayer. The Borobudur is situated in this valley which is completely surrounded by mosques, which is why there are all of these different voices bouncing off all over the place. Those recordings really intrigued me.


Pram (Java)

*Were your first couple of albums done strictly through direct sales or did you have a distributor for them?*

I had some distributors, but mostly in Europe. Because they were cassette only releases, a lot of people weren't interested in them. I had a lot of comments like, "God, if this was on LP or CD, I could sell a hundred of these, but since it's only on cassette, I could only sell ten." But at the time I just couldn't afford to put them out on anything other than cassette.

*How is the interest in your music from shore to shore, in America as opposed to Europe?*

The people who hear it seem to like it. It's hard to say because most of my distribution was in Europe, so that's where I heard the most comments.

*Will the music always be a documentation process for you or, of course you'd like to make some money at this and make a big splash there, but is that a concern for you? Do you ever think, "Well, I should do this because that will help to sell more CDs."*

If that was a concern, I would probably be doing more pop music. Let's face it, Michael Jackson and Madonna aren't going to be afraid of my album when it hits the shelves. It's not going to affect their sales. No, I'm more interested in the music than the monetary aspects. It would be nice to be able to make a living at it, and, hopefully, some day that may happen, but I want it to occur because of the music, not because of the masses.

*Once you get your Masters, what's next?*

Oh, that's a good question. [laughs] I'm still trying to figure that out. I mean, I'm on this road. I could keep going on to the Ph.D. and then go on and teach somewhere. That would take care of the monetary aspect. I could survive that way. At this point, I may end up doing that. I'm not sure yet.

*Not a bad way to go...*

There are worse things to do. [laughs]

*Now that your new album,* Lilin Dewa, *is out, is there another album in the offing? Is it just more school and then more research?*

I have a couple of things that I'm working on right now. There's going to be a track on the next *Twilight Earth* compilation. They are doing a volume three and they asked me to do a track for that. I may do one of those mini-CDs for Amplexus. That's going to be called *The Venerable Dark Cloud.*

*I think it's interesting from what I've heard of your music that there seems to be a really great dove-tailing of a lot of different style and a lot of different influences and you seem to pull it off without it seeming, not contrived, but it was a conscious effort. It all flows together naturally and I think that's really great.*

Thanks, that's really the point, If it all seems natural together then I know it's worked.

by Carnell

All photos by Loren Nerell.

# HEATHE

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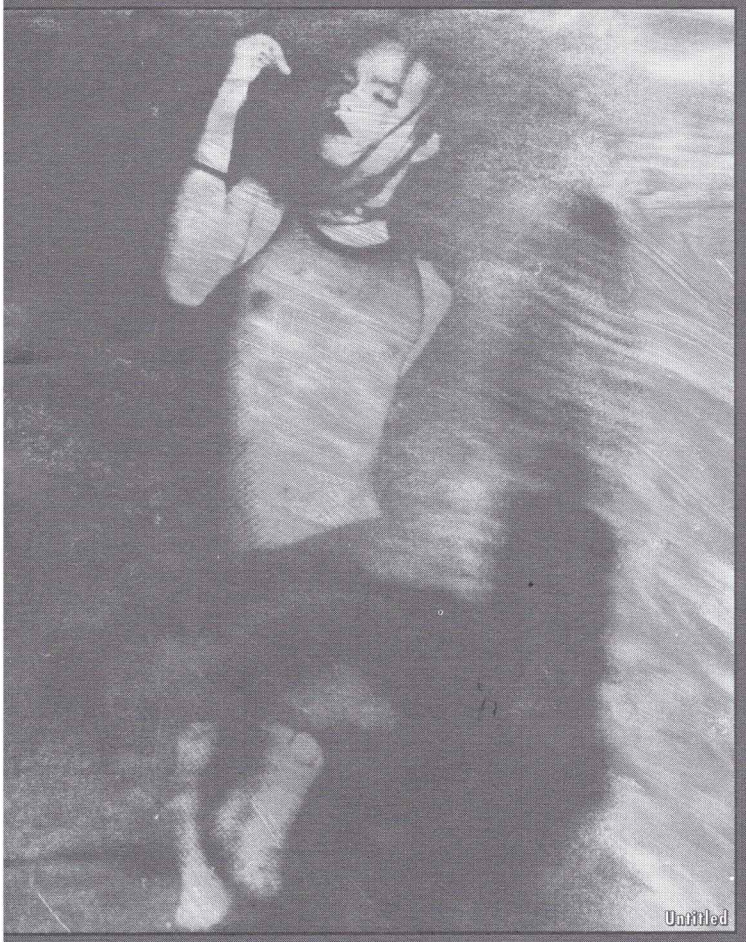

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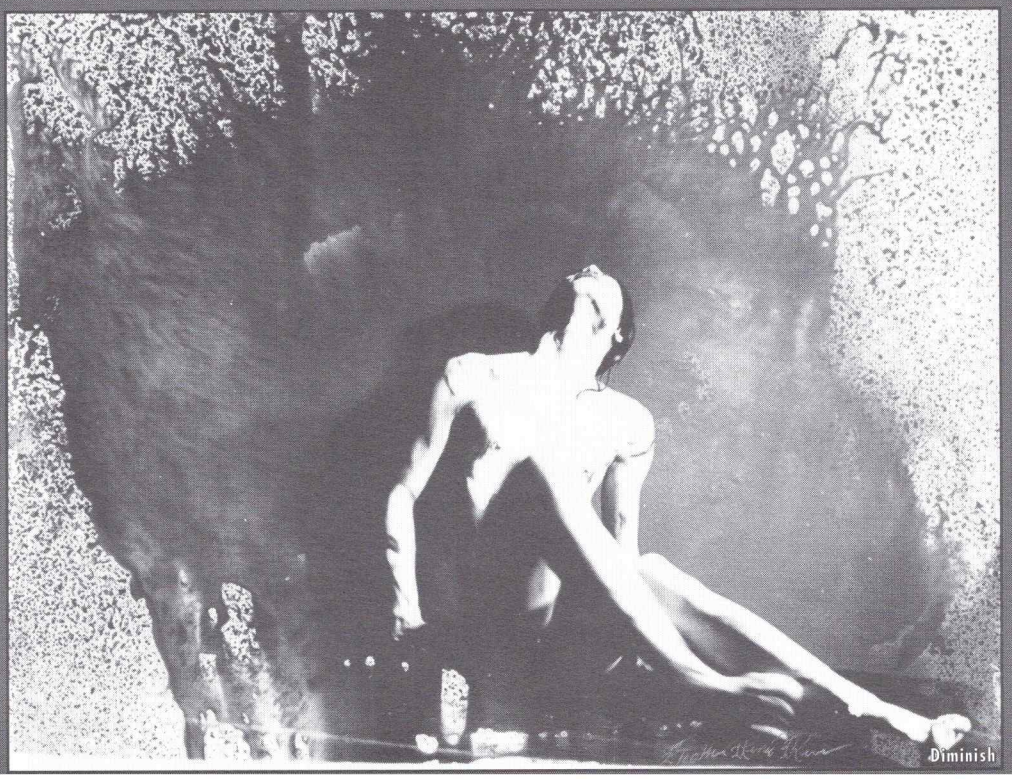

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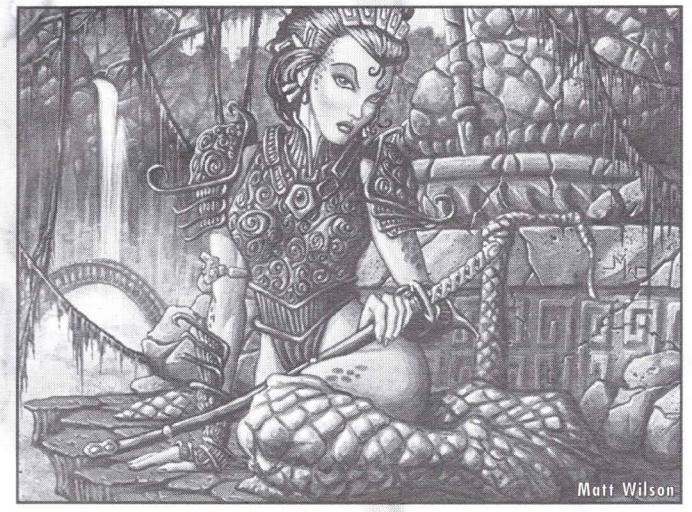
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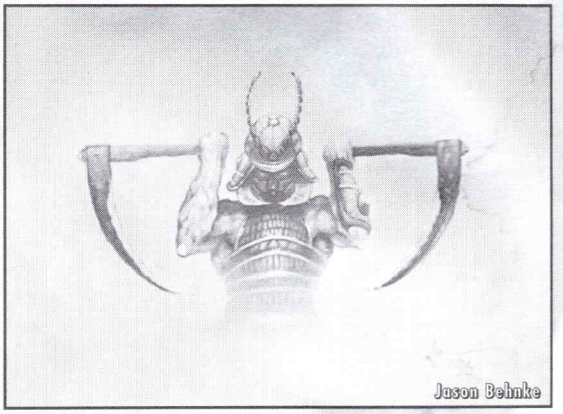


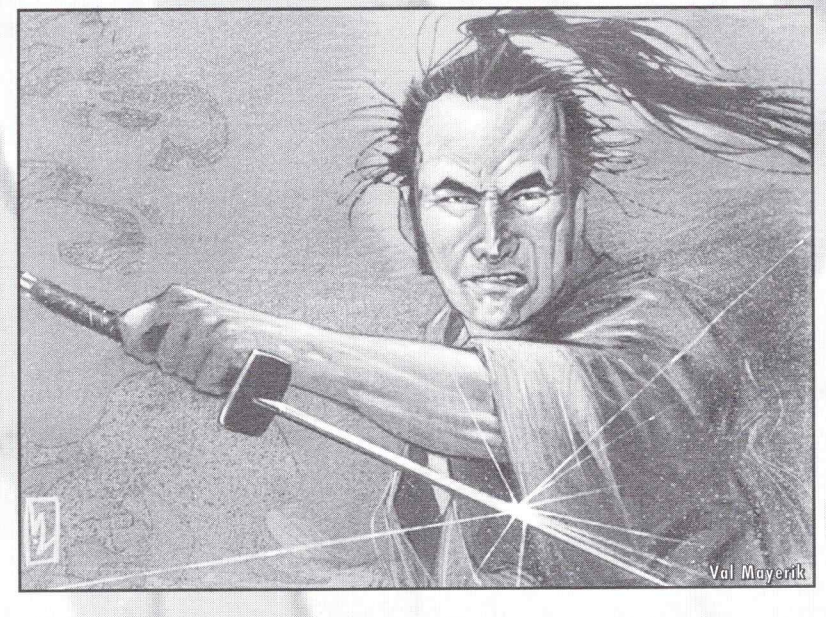


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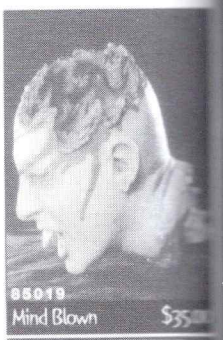
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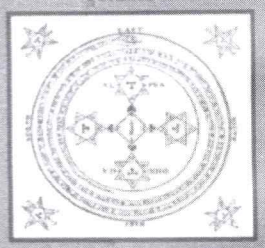

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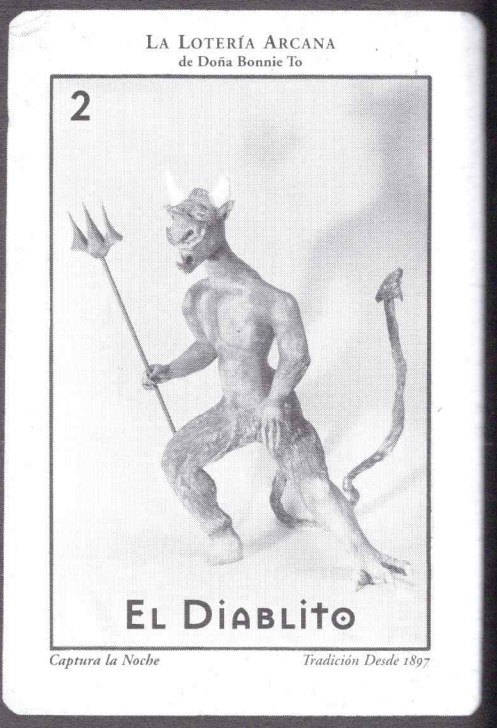


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